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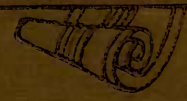
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HARTWELL FARM



MISS L. B. COMINS



BESS-TOWNSEND-BOWER



HER — BOOK

Bessie
from Aunt-Carr
Christmas / 890



THE UNEXPECTED AVOWAL.

THE
HARTWELL FARM.

BY
LIZZIE B. COMINS,
AUTHOR OF "MARION BERKLEY."



PHILADELPHIA:
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To

MY DEAR AUNT ELIZA,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK,

NOT BECAUSE IT IS AN APPROPRIATE OR WORTHY TRIBUTE
TO HER MANY VIRTUES,

BUT ON ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT LOVE

I BEAR HER.

THE HARTWELL FARM.



CHAPTER I.

THE HARTWELL FARM.

"THEODORA! Theodora! come down, dear; here's a letter for you."

"A letter for me!" exclaimed Theodora Hartwell, as she ran downstairs. "Who is it from?"

"Your Uncle John," replied her mother; "open it quickly; I am quite anxious to know what he has to say to you."

Theodora seated herself in the window, tore open her letter in true girl-fashion, and by the fading twilight hurriedly devoured its contents, while her mother sat looking on.

"O mother! mother!" cried Theodora, jumping up in great excitement, "what *do* you think Uncle John wants? It is just like him. I do think he's perfectly splendid, and if it will *only* come out right, and I can raise clothes enough, and you and father think it's best, I shall be radiantly happy." And she stopped, fairly out of breath.

"Well, dear," said her mother, "if you will only tell me what it is all about I shall be much obliged; as yet your remarks are not very lucid."

"To be sure! Well, just listen to the letter, and see if you ever heard anything more glorious in your life;"

and Theodora commenced reading the letter aloud, throwing in sundry remarks of a decidedly original nature: —

“BOSTON, July 5, 187—.

“DEAR LITTLE DORA” (Ahem! *little*, he might just as well have left that out): “I don’t know whether it was because the Fourth of July celebration yesterday took me back to the days of my youth, when your mother and I used to frighten the wits out of your grandmother by firing crackers and burning holes in our pinafores, or whether it was owing to some unexplainable cause, but certain I am that I could not get the thought of your mother out of my head all day yesterday; and, thinking of the mother, naturally made me think of the daughter. I believe it is two years since I saw you, and now of course you must be a young lady, but as you live off there in the backwoods I don’t believe that you have come to the panniers, and flounces, and frizzes, and all sorts of toggery that our young ladies in the city load themselves with.”

“No, my dear uncle, I haven’t as yet; but it’s a clear case of ‘Jacky wouldn’t, ’cause he couldn’t.’”

“Is that in the letter, dear?” asked Mrs. Hartwell.

“No, mother, that’s original. Let me see, where was I? —”

“At any rate I want to see for myself what you are like; see if there is any look of the mother in you” (Poor man, he’s doomed to disappointment); “so I propose that you come down the middle of this month, and go with us to Scranton to spend the summer.”

“There, mother,” cried Theodora; “now you know the pith of the whole thing, — the *crème de la crème*. Do you suppose I can go?”

“Read on, my dear, read on,” quietly replied her mother.

“But it’s dreadfully hard to read on when I’m in such a state of excitement, however —”

“I know your father and mother will let you come” (of course they will); “it will do you good, and Kate will be delighted to have you with her. We leave here the fifteenth, but you need not trouble yourself about the journey; if your mother gives her consent, I

promise to go after you; it will be a good opportunity for me to see that famous peach-orchard."

"I don't believe he has much faith in the peach-orchard," laughed Theodora.

Mrs. Hartwell shook her head, and Theodora continued to the end without making further interruptions.

"Kate says she is going to write you about what will be necessary for your wardrobe; but don't think that you will be obliged to be dressed up all the time. Scranton is a very democratic, independent place, or you may be pretty sure your old uncle would not spend all his summers there. Remember, when I invite you to go, I mean, of course, that you go at my expense; so don't worry about money matters,— I'll manage all that myself.

"Remember me to your father and the boys, and give a kiss to your mother for your
OLD UNCLE JACK."

"There, mother, isn't that splendid?"

"It certainly is very kind in Uncle John, very kind indeed."

"And it is so nice in him, letting me know at once that he pays for everything, instead of leaving me in a horrible state of uncertainty. But, may I go, mother?"

"My dear Theodora, how can I answer you so soon? In the first place, you have read the letter so fast, and thrown in so many comments, that I can hardly understand it all yet; and, in the second place, I must hear what your father has to say. Open the front blinds, and while I read the letter over quietly go and see that the supper-table is all right. Your father and the boys will be here directly."

"Yes, and I suppose the boys will be as hungry as bears; they have been way over to the east pasture. Here's the letter, mother, and do just say, 'I'll think about it,' won't you? For when you say that, I always feel it is a sure thing." And Theodora jumped up to see if the supper-table was as tidy as the particular eye

of her mother always wished to see it, stopping half way to throw herself into a tragic attitude, clasping her hands in a melodramatic style, that on the stage would have moved the most marble-hearted parent. But Theodora's mother was not a marble-hearted parent, and was too well used to her daughter's theatrical outbursts to be much disturbed by them ; so she only laughed quietly, and settled herself to give the letter a more quiet perusal than it had received from her impetuous daughter.

CHAPTER II.

DESCRIPTION.

RICHARD HARTWELL, the owner of Hartwell Farm, was the only son of the late Richard Hartwell, Esq., the great landed proprietor.

The son had inherited his father's broad acres, the old house that had been the family mansion for three generations, and a large and well-invested fortune; but with all this he had not inherited the keenness, shrewdness, and natural love of farming, which were the great characteristics of the old squire. The present Richard Hartwell was a tall, slightly built man, with long, delicate hands, that had a habit of nervously fingering everything they touched. His features were finely cut; the forehead high and full, the nose straight and rather sharp, the mouth small and sensitive. His eyes were deep gray, very beautiful, but having, when his face was in repose, a far-away look about them, that showed at once, to a careful observer, the character of the man. He was a dreamer.

He was a great student, in fact a learned man; but his learning was not of that kind which could be brought to bear upon the every-day things of this world; he was thoroughly unpractical.

Shortly after his father's death he married a lady several years younger than himself, Miss Theodora Temple, and bought a house in Boston, that he might better enjoy the society of his many literary friends.

He intrusted the management of his farm to a man in

whom he placed the most implicit confidence; everything was left in the charge of this overseer, who proved as unprincipled at heart as he had appeared frank, honest, and trustworthy. Mr. Hartwell spent his summers at Hartwell Farm, roaming about the woods with his young wife, writing essays on scientific or abstruse subjects, or in reading for hours in the old-fashioned library; but never investigating the books kept by his overseer, or taking any practical interest in the place. The result was, that in a few years the farm, which had always paid its own way, and a handsome income besides, in the days of the old squire, began to give in smaller and smaller returns. The shrewd overseer always had some plausible excuse ready, which set the matter right with his credulous employer. Heavy rains or a drought had ruined the crops; rents had decreased, while farm wages were higher; first one thing and then another, to serve as an excuse, and all implicitly believed by Mr. Hartwell.

But one morning Mr. Hartwell found his overseer had decamped, taking with him a considerable sum in ready money, besides all the account-books belonging to the farm, leaving nothing behind him to show the systematic course of swindling he had been carrying on under the eyes of his employer for years. To a man like Mr. Hartwell the treachery of one in whom he had confided so implicitly was a heavier blow than the loss of money.

Misfortunes never come singly, and the same week that showed him the rascality of his overseer brought Mr. Hartwell the news that the company in which all his funds were invested had failed, failed beyond the hope of paying a twentieth part of their liabilities. He immediately sold his town house, removed with his family to his country estate, and resolved to carry on the farm himself.

For a few years he appeared to prosper, but it was

only while the money received from the sale of his house lasted; and that soon melted away for he had no more practical knowledge of farming than a child. He had a perfect mania for trying to adapt everything that grows, from grain to vegetables, to a soil foreign to its nature. The result is what might have been expected, no crops, exhausted soil, and money out of pocket.

Hard-fisted, wiry-looking men, who tilled their own land, came to look at his farm with its wonderful, "new-fangled notions," made a few dry, caustic remarks, and went away to laugh in their sleeves, and wonder what the "old squire would say, if he were alive."

But Mr. Hartwell continued his experiments as long as he had any money to spend on them, and then gradually the place fell into that state so wretched to see, that tells its own story so plainly,—broken-down fences, neglected barns, gates hanging by the hinges, and the broad acres that once had been the pride of the country round choked with weeds and stubble.

But there was one idea to which Mr. Hartwell still clung with his accustomed tenacity, and that was the peach-orchard before alluded to in the letter of his brother-in-law. He had in his neglected nursery a few peach-trees of a superior variety, which for three successive seasons had yielded a remarkably large quantity of fruit, which fact had so delighted him that he immediately determined to set out a large peach-orchard, and raise the fruit for the market. His friends argued with him, telling him that it would be throwing away time and money to attempt anything of the kind, as the spring frosts and uncertain climate would render it almost impossible to raise anything of a crop. But when did arguing ever move a determined man? Mr. Hartwell listened politely to what any one had to say on the subject, never became angry if allusions were made to any of his former failures, and forthwith planted his orchard. However, the peach-

orchard was now in its third year, and certainly Mr. Hartwell could congratulate himself upon the success of his experiment so far as the appearance of the trees was concerned, for they gave great promise for the future; they had bloomed very early in the season, and the young fruit was finely set; they would certainly yield this year as much as such young trees were capable of bearing. Some of the farmers who had laughed at "Hartwell's last freak" came to look at them, and seemed really quite impressed with their fine appearance, remarking among themselves afterwards that "they shouldn't be surprised if Squire Hartwell did really make them peaches yield considerable; but then this was a remarkable season."

But, despite Mr. Hartwell's visionary, unpractical temperament, there was one thing to which he attended with the strictest fidelity, and that was the education of his children.

Theodora and the boys — there were three of them, Dick Frank, and Ralph — had never been to school, and yet it would be almost impossible to find, always excepting those young specimens of hot-house culture forced into an unnatural size and early bloom, four children of similar ages with such sound, sensible education. When or how Mr. Hartwell carried on his educational system would have been a perfect mystery to any one who might have been at the farm either for a short or protracted visit; for Theodora and the boys seemed to run wild at all hours of the day, and studies appeared to be a secondary consideration.

Theodora Hartwell was below the medium height, plump, but not yet stout, with a clear complexion, and roses on her cheeks the year round. Her face was not one that could be called really beautiful, yet one never saw it without wanting to see it again; her hair, which was of that exquisite and very rare shade of reddish-

brown, which has touches of gold in it in the sunlight, was long, thick, and curly, and she always wore it in two braids down her back; her eyes were beautiful, but how can I describe them? At one moment they seemed to be almost black, at another deep blue; but they were in reality gray, shaded by long black lashes; her nose — well, I must confess it—it was a pug, not a broad, ugly, turned-up nose, but just a saucy, independent little pug; her mouth was not a rose-bud, but a good, sensible, kissable mouth, with a funny little dimple in each corner, and when she laughed she showed a row of the prettiest pearly teeth, in a way that was terribly fascinating, and made one watch her all the time she talked, hoping she would laugh again. In short, she had one of those piquante, bewitching faces, that receive more admiration from the opposite sex than many others which could rightfully lay claim to much greater beauty. Theodora was nineteen, but she seemed years younger; not that she ever appeared awkward or verdant, — she was too bright and had been too carefully brought up for that, — but living, as she had from childhood, away from city life and city girls, she was perfectly free from all their thousand-and-one little vanities and affectations. Thanks to her mother, she had a good, practical knowledge of household affairs, for with their small means they could only afford to keep one servant in-doors, and a man to attend to the out-of-door work; so the domestic duties were divided between Mrs. Hartwell, Theodora, and good, faithful Sarah, who had been with the family ever since before Theodora was born, sharing their adversity as well as their prosperity, and feeling herself to be one of the family, as indeed they all considered her.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATION.

I LEFT Theodora setting the tea-table ; she had hardly finished when her father and the boys came in, the latter, as she had predicted, ravenously hungry ; but they had to restrain their appetites until all traces of their recent tramp were removed, for without such preliminaries they were never allowed to sit down to a meal.

"Dode's up to something, I know," said Dick, as he took his seat at the table ; "her mouth's twitching. Out with it, Dode !"

"I know," exclaimed Frank ; "she's had a letter, — Joe told me he got her one. Say, Dode, was it from Mr. Sweeton ?"

"Mr. Sweeton !" exclaimed Theodora, coloring slightly ; "you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Frank."

"Well, he was a *sweet un* on you, and no mistake," said Dick ; "but I didn't believe you'd correspond with him."

"If I couldn't make a better pun than that, I'd give it up," replied Theodora.

Mr. Hartwell looked up at the mention of Mr. Sweeton, who was the young minister down in the village, at the present time away for a vacation.

"Theodora," he said, "what does this all mean ? Have you had a letter from Mr. Sweeton ?"

"No, father," replied Theodora, coloring under the

mischievous glances of her brothers, "nothing of the kind, — it was from Uncle Jack."

"Uncle Jack!" cried Dick.

"Uncle Jack!" echoed Frank, — "is he coming here?"

"Well, that is a difficult question to answer," replied Theodora, looking at her mother with a mischievous expression on her face; "but I *guess* he will."

"That's jolly!" exclaimed Ralph, the youngest boy, who had been too busily engaged with his supper to make any comment before.

"There now, father," said Theodora, "you see how anxious the boys all are to see him; but yet it all depends on you whether he comes or not."

"Depends on me, does it?" said Mr. Hartwell; "then he will certainly come, for I don't know of a person whom I should be more pleased to see than your Uncle Jack."

Mrs. Hartwell was about to speak, but Theodora gave her a little, expressive look, and she kept quiet, letting her daughter manage things to suit herself.

"Well, father, it depends upon you whether he comes or not, because *if* he comes, it will be to take me back with him to spend the rest of the summer at Scranton. There! now it's all out! O father, *do* say yes!"

"Go back with him to spend the summer at Scranton!" cried Dick.

"Go to Scranton!" echoed both Frank and Ralph.

"Yes, go to Scranton," repeated Theodora. "He has written me just the nicest letter; wants me to come ever so much, and so does Kate; pays all expenses, and comes after me himself. Now, father, you haven't said a word; you will let me go, won't you?"

"I have not had a chance to say a word," said Mr.

Hartwell. "But what do you think of it, mother? Is this the first you have heard of it?"

"Oh, no," replied Mrs. Hartwell. "Dora showed me the letter, but I thought I would keep quiet and let her break the ice herself."

"But about her going, do you think it will be best? Do you see the way clear?"

"I must say I approve of it," said Mrs. Hartwell.

That settled the question at once, Theodora knew. She had sat looking anxiously from one parent to the other, and had not seen a look of disapproval on the face of either; but she knew that, after all, her mother's opinion would be the one that would decide the case.

"Now," said Mrs. Hartwell, the morning after it was decided that Theodora should go to Scranton, "to-day is Saturday; you have only a little over a week to get ready in; so sit down and write your uncle immediately, carry the letter to the post-office, and call and see if Charity Wygott can come here next Monday and stay the whole week."

"I'll write the letter, mother," said Theodora, seating herself at the large, old-fashioned desk; "but really, — I don't want to be fussy, — Charity Wygott does very well for here; but then, you know, Kate dresses so fashionably, and has everything made in the latest style. Do you really think she will be able to make my things look just as they ought?"

"Kate? No, I really don't think she'll have much to do with the making of your clothes."

Theodora laughed. "No, of course I don't mean Kate, I *was* rather confused, — Charity Wygott."

"I don't suppose, my dear," said Mrs. Hartwell, "that Charity will make your clothes as fashionable as Kate's, and I really should hope she would not; but as

she is the only dress-maker in the village, I don't see but what you will have to be satisfied ; and you may be sure of one thing, she will do the very best for you that she knows how, for a kinder-hearted woman never lived, and she will feel as pleased to think you are going as if you were her own child."

"I know she will," replied Theodora, biting the end of her pen ; "and she certainly is one of the best old souls in the world, if she does murder the king's English, and is rather behind the times. But really, mother, I don't see what she is going to work on when we get her here."

"Leave that to me," replied her mother, with a rather mysterious air ; "you write your letter, and engage Charity, and I promise to furnish the materials for your wardrobe."

"But how are you going to get them?" persisted Theodora. "I don't believe you could find anything in the village ; and besides you evidently don't mean to go there to-day."

"You write your letter," repeated Mrs. Hartwell, good-humoredly. "If you don't answer it soon, your Uncle John will think you don't care to go, and may invite some one else."

Theodora applied herself to her letter, and wrote away in silence for some minutes, when she laid down her pen and exclaimed, "There ! he said Kate was going to write me what I should need ! Don't you think I had better wait until I hear from her before I make any preparations ?"

"And then not have any letter from her at all," replied Mrs. Hartwell ; "or, at best, not until the last moment. No, my dear, I have known too many of Kate's promises to end in non-fulfilment to have much faith in them. Not but what she is perfectly sincere when she

makes them, but other things are constantly occurring to drive them out of her mind."

Theodora wrote her letter and carried it to the office. By the time she had returned, dinner was on the table.

"Well, dear," said Mrs. Hartwell, "what luck?"

"Oh, the best in the world," said Theodora, seating herself at the table with the others. "For a perfect wonder Charity Wygott isn't engaged next week. She had kept the time for herself to rest in, she said; but she says coming here is the best rest she could have, for it would be 'just like going out of the ruts to walk on the grass side of the road.' Wasn't that just like her?"

"Exactly," replied the mother; "and I know just what she means by it. She goes the round of all the village houses, week after week, sees the same people, and hears the same subjects discussed. Coming up here is an entire change for her."

"So Charity is coming to fit out Theodora for her visit, is she?" said Mr. Hartwell. "It is rather a pity, Dody, that your Uncle John did not defer his invitation until another year; then the peach orchard would be in its prime, and I should feel that I could afford to fit you out quite handsomely; as it is, I will give you twenty dollars for little extra expenses, and your mother says she will see to the rest."

"Oh, thanks, father," replied Theodora. "I didn't expect half as much; twenty dollars will do a great deal for me, I know, because mother has implied that she has the wealth of the Indies buried away somewhere, and it's to be rooted out for my especial benefit."

Mrs. Hartwell laughed. "Don't get your expectations raised too high," she said, "or you may be disappointed. However, I think, with the twenty dollars for a pair of new boots, gloves, hat, etc., I can make you out a very respectable wardrobe."

"Twenty dollars!" cried Dick. "I should think you might get along, Dode. I know if I had all that, I wouldn't spend it on hats and gloves, and such trash. I'd get a new bat and ball, that would knock any you ever saw to splitherines."

"Well, as I don't know where or what splitherines is, I'm not much the wiser," replied Theodora, passing the plate for another piece of chicken, for her anticipated journey had by no means taken away her good, country appetite; "but I'll promise you one thing, I'll send you the best bat and ball I can find floating in the water at Scranton."

"Umph!" exclaimed Dick, contemptuously; "mighty kind, aint you? I really thought you meant to send me one."

"Well, I did mean just what I said. When I find one floating in the water I'll send it to you. Meanwhile, I wouldn't advise you to throw away your old one, because you know it may be some time before the new one gets here."

"Mother," asked Dick, appearing to take no notice of Theodora's disposition to tease him, "didn't Mr. Sweeton say he was going to the sea-shore? I tell you, wouldn't it be just the jolliest go if he should happen to go to Scranton?"

Theodora laid down her knife and fork with an expression of despair. "You don't really think," she exclaimed, "that there is any danger of that, do you, mother?"

Mrs. Hartwell only smiled.

"Danger?" cried Dick; "just hear her! Now, Dody, you needn't look as if you felt so badly about it. We know too much for that. Oh!" clasping his hands, and rolling his eyes ecstatically, "to think of meandering by the 'sad sea-waves,' keeping company with the lovely Sweeton!"

Theodora laughed in spite of herself at Dick's absurd manner. She turned to her mother for help, but she was laughing too. "Now, mother, I think you let him go too far. He ought to be ashamed to say such things, and you are encouraging him by laughing at him. I don't think it's fair."

"O mother," cried Dick, before Mrs. Hartwell could reply, "just think how enchanting it will be to hear Mr. Sweeton's melodious voice mingling with the ocean's roar!" and, excusing himself from the table, he retired to the entry, shouting, "Cub, oh, cub with be, the boon is beabing."

"I don't think it is right myself," replied her mother, checking her amusement; "but really, Theodora, if you will tease Dick, you must expect him to tease you back again."

"But it's a very different thing, the way I tease him,—that's only about things; he teases me about *persons*."

"Does he?" dryly remarked Frank, who was the quiet one of the family. "I thought he only used the singular number."

"Well, singular number or not," said Dora, "I really think there has been quite enough of it."

"Come, boys," said Mr. Hartwell, rousing himself from a long reverie, and withdrawing from the table, "I've something I want to show you that I know you will enjoy very much,—a new specimen of *Lepidoptera* I found this morning. Theodora, I presume we shall have to excuse you from our Natural History class, for the rest of the summer."

"Yes, father, I think you will, for next week I shall be occupied in turning myself into a new specimen. I've been in the chrysalis state quite long enough, but I can't say what I shall hatch myself."

"An Atticus *Luna*, I rather think," laughed her father.

"Oh, I hope not anything half so green," answered Theodora, as her father took his hat and left the house.

"Now, Theodora," said her mother, "you and I will go upstairs and 'root out' that 'wealth of the Indies' you were talking about; I have done all the mending, so we have the whole afternoon before us to get ready for Charity Wygott, Monday morning."

Theodora sprang up, all eagerness to see what her mother could have in store for her, but suddenly she stopped on her way to the stairs. "Mother," she said, as Mrs. Hartwell came up behind her, "I think I have been very selfish; here I've been so perfectly delighted and carried away with the idea of going to Scranton, that it actually has never occurred to me, that when I am gone all my part of the work will come on you; it has commenced this very day, by your doing all the mending instead of half."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Hartwell, putting her arm round Theodora as they walked upstairs together more like sisters than mother and daughter, "do you think I would keep you at home just for that? Indeed, I am only too thankful that you have had such an excellent opportunity to go out and see something of the world. Your life here is about the same from one year to another, and although I think it is a very bright, happy life, and a very useful one too, dear, I think a change is always good for people. I am not afraid that one summer of gayety will spoil you for your quiet home."

"No, motherdy, I don't think it will; but all you have said only proves the more decisively that it is selfish in me to go. If my life is just the same from year to year, what is yours, I should like to know?"

"A very quiet, very happy one, I assure you. I

don't think I would exchange it now for any other; but I don't forget that it would not always have suited me. I was young once myself, and had my 'good times' with the others of my age; now I want you to have yours."

"You're the dearest and the most unselfish mother in the world," enthusiastically exclaimed Theodora, as they reached the upper hall; "but still you don't set my mind quite at rest. Suppose you should have one of your old attacks?"

"Now, Dody, don't worry about that. I have not had one for over a year, and may never have another. I have not felt so well in years as I have this summer; so you need not have any anxiety on that score."

"But promise me this," persisted Dora, "that if you find you are getting tired, or don't feel well, you will send for me. I should never forgive myself if I came home and found you all worn out, while I had done nothing but enjoy myself all summer."

"I promise, dear, for the sake of setting your mind at rest. Now come into the red room and see what I have for you."

The "red room," as it had always been called, was a chamber, never used except, on the now rare occasion, when a visitor came to Hartwell Farm. It was very large, furnished with solid mahogany, that had stood there ever since the days of Theodora's great-grandfather. Mrs. Hartwell pulled up one of the shades, drew back the heavy curtain, and the afternoon's sun flooded the room with light, falling upon the immense high-post bedstead with its canopy curtain of red brocade, the high-backed chairs, and great chest of drawers which Mrs. Hartwell immediately proceeded to unlock.

Theodora looked on in surprise; she could not remember ever having seen these drawers open in her life, and

wondered what they could contain that would prove a very great addition to her wardrobe.

Mrs. Hartwell looked up with an amused smile as she opened the bottom drawer, and Theodora came and stood beside her.

"Why, mother!" said Theodora, "what can you have in there that I want? Something that belonged to Grandmother Temple? I don't think those old brocades will be very suitable for me."

"The old brocades are not in here," said Mrs. Hartwell, as she took out something done up carefully in blue cambric; "don't you be afraid of my dressing you too old. Let me see. You wanted the 'wealth of the Indies;' well, take that, and you'll have some of it certainly."

"Mother, what can you mean?" cried Theodora, on tiptoe with expectation. "Shall I open this?"

"No, not yet," replied her mother, taking out two more packages done up like the first; "wait until I have shut up the room; then we will go into your room and undo all three."

Mrs. Hartwell laid the two bundles across Theodora's arms, locked the drawer, pulled down the curtains, and followed her daughter, who had by this time reached her own chamber and deposited her treasures on the bed.

"Now which shall I open first?" she asked. "I want to begin with the one that's the least elegant."

"Well, then, take this," said Mrs. Hartwell, handing her the smallest bundle; "but don't make up your mind for anything elegant, because that is only pretty."

"And the others are elegant," said Theodora, as she took from the cambric and discovered a *barège* dress, white ground covered with small embroidered figures of scarlet and black, old-fashioned in make, but otherwise as fresh-looking as if it had just come out of the store. "Isn't it lovely?" exclaimed Theodora. "Why, mother,

the material doesn't look a bit old-timey. Where did it come from?"

"I had it when you were a little tot; but I never wore it many times, for you did not like to see me in anything red. When our money troubles began I laid it away, thinking that some time it might do for you. I knew it would never look old-fashioned, and I depend upon Charity Wygott's skill to cut it over so that it will make you a very nice dress."

"Of course it will," said Theodora. "It's just the thing for the beach. Now let me see what I shall have: there's my white piqué I had last summer, — I'm so thankful I had an overskirt, — that's just as good as new; my black and white calico I made this spring, and that purple and white one, that never *will* wear out, with this *barège* for afternoons. I shall be very well off, to say nothing of those other bundles."

"When I used to go to the beach," said Mrs. Hartwell, "everybody used to have one dress expressly for picnics, and climbing round generally, something woollen but not very thick, made with a loose waist and short skirt, and I remember I never enjoyed any of my clothes more than I did my romping suit; no, not even the dresses I wore to the 'hops.'"

"Oh, the hops!" cried Theodora, with a rather doubtful expression of countenance. "I forgot all about them. What shall I do for dresses? Do you suppose this *barège* will do? I shall want it *very* long."

While Theodora was speaking, she was undoing one of the other bundles; as she took out the last pin, the cambric fell off of itself and down on the floor rolled a light blue silk. Theodora held up her hand in amazement.

"A blue silk, and for me! My cup of happiness is just full to the brim. Whenever I have dared to dream

of myself arrayed in all the gorgeousness of a full-blown young woman, I have always beheld myself in a light blue silk, with a tremendous train; and now my dream is to be realized! Only think what a wardrobe I shall have, and not go out of the house to get it! Mother, you're a perfect treasure!"

"But, the 'wealth of the Indies,' Theodora, — you haven't come to that."

"Sure enough," replied Theodora; "but I don't thoroughly realize the blue silk yet."

The last bundle was very quickly divested of its cover, and Theodora shook out of its folds an embroidered white muslin, once pure as the driven snow, but now yellow with having lain for years in the old chest of drawers. Theodora held it up with such a comical expression of disappointment that her mother burst into a laugh, saying, "You don't think much of the 'wealth of the Indies,' Theodora?"

"No, mother, I confess I don't," answered Theodora, as she turned the dress over and over, and held up to herself the funny, old-fashioned shirred waist. "I suppose I can't appreciate it; is it really handsome?"

"Just wait until Charity Wygott sees it," said Mrs. Hartwell. "I can seem to see her eyes snap. Why, you couldn't buy such a dress now for love or money. It was brought over in one of your Grandfather Temple's ships expressly for your grandmother; she gave it to me when I grew up, and I wore it when I was bridesmaid at your Uncle John's wedding. Everybody thought it was exquisite. See, it is as delicate as tarlatan, and look at the embroidery!"

"Isn't it rather window-curtainy?" asked Theodora, doubtfully.

"Window-curtainy!" laughed her mother; "indeed it isn't. If I had anything else that would be half as

pretty for you, you shouldn't have it just for your want of appreciation. But I know Charity's ingenuity will make it over in the present fashion; you see it is very full, and has three deep flounces and a hem."

"I suppose it *is* beautiful, mother; but will it *ever* come white?"

"Why, of course it will. I shall have it done up, after it is made. Come, now, we have a good afternoon's work before us to rip these up; you can take the barège and silk, and I'll manage the poor, offending muslin."

CHAPTER IV.

“VANITAS, VANITAS, OMNIS EST VANITAS.”

“HERE I be, Mrs. Hartwell,” cried the cheery voice of Charity Wygott, as she made her appearance early Monday morning, “bag and baggage; but my trunk won’t take up much room; it aint a reg’lar Saratogy.”

“I’m glad to see you, Charity,” said Mrs. Hartwell, coming forward and greeting Charity with as much cordiality as if she had been a distinguished guest.

“And so am I,” said Theodora, dancing into the hall; “I don’t know as I was ever more delighted to see any one in my life.”

“Oh! I dare say,” said Charity, good-naturedly, as she untied her bonnet-strings. “I haven’t the least doubt of it; it’s strange how pleased the young girls always are to see me. Quite remarkable, aint it, Mrs. Hartwell?”

“Oh, very!” laughingly replied Mrs. Hartwell; “but come, Charity, I thought you would excuse me if I did not wait breakfast for you, as it is washing-day; but I have saved some, nice and hot.”

“Lord bless you, ma’am!” exclaimed Charity, “I had mine ’fore I came. Just tell me where I am to work, and I can kind o’ get things planned, by the time you are ready to come upstairs.

“But do sit down and take a cup of coffee,” pressed Mrs. Hartwell; “you’ve had a long walk.”

“Pshaw! I don’t think no more o’ that walk than

just nothin' at all," replied Charity, as she threw her shawl and bonnet over her arm. "Just tell me where I'm to go, and that's all I ask."

"Well, if you persist," said Mrs. Hartwell, "Theodora will show you your room. We shall sew in the north room, where it will be cool and comfortable all day long."

"Oh, I'll show you," said Theodora, taking up Charity's carpet-bag. "You are to have the room next to mine, and if you snore or have the nightmare, or anything else horrible, you may expect to see me pouncing in on you; so don't be frightened!"

"No danger of that," said Charity, as she followed Theodora upstairs; "I haven't lived in the woods all my life to be scared at an owl."

"Do you mean to insinuate that I'm an owl?" said Theodora.

"I don't make no insinuations," said Charity; "but owls is about the only creatures I know of in these parts that prowls round nights, unless it's bats."

"Well, then," said Theodora, as she entered the room which Charity was to occupy, "if I prove a screech-owl don't you make any complaints. Now, if you haven't any prinking to do, I'll take you into the work-room."

"Really now, how *do* I look?" asked Miss Charity, with a perfectly sober face; "how's my crimps, and them curls behind? I hope they aint all out."

Now Charity Wygott's hair was brushed as smooth as satin, and drawn back into a little doughnut behind, without even the suggestion of a stray hair; but Theodora assured her that her crimps were lovely, and very becoming, and the curls so light and airy she could hardly see them.

"Well, that's just the way I intended they should look," replied Charity, with an air of satisfaction; "now, if you will lead the way, I'm ready for work."

"I hope you've made up your mind, Charity," said Theodora, as she stood with her hand on the handle of the work-room door, "that it's only old things you've got to work on, — dresses of mother's to make over for me, — for I haven't bought a thing; so I hope you are feeling particularly brilliant and ingenious."

"Never felt more so in my life," replied Charity, as she took off her spectacles and rubbed them preparatory to examining whatever might be laid before her. "I'm just brimful of inventions."

"That suits me exactly," said Theodora, "for I want you to understand that I wish to be gotten up in the very best style. By that I don't mean the very *tip-top* of the fashion. I've no desire to make myself ridiculous; but I've lived off here in the country all my life, and you can testify that I've always dressed as plain as a pipe-stem; now I'm going to bloom out! Just think, Charity Wygott, I'm nineteen years old! nineteen, and I've never had a long dress!"

"Well, you ought to have one now, to be sure," answered Charity. "There's a time and a place for everything; and I will say that I've always held you up as a model to all the girls in the village, regardin' dress. I can't say they've always followed your example; but that's neither here nor there. Your clothes have always seemed appropriate for a quiet town like this. Now you're going to a more stirrin' place, and of course want things a little more genteel, and I for one am downright glad you're going. 'Every dog must have its day,' you know."

"Charity Wygott, those are noble sentiments, and I honor you for entertaining them," said Theodora. "I always did think your judgment was pretty good. Now what is your opinion of that?" and Theodora held up the *barège*.

"As pretty a barège as ever I see! Now where under the canopy did your ma raise that? It aint a bit old-fashioned looking, but I dare say she's had it these ages."

"And so she has," replied Theodora; "she laid it away years ago, thinking that I might like it some time or other, and now it comes in just right. Is there enough to make me an over-skirt?"

"Let me see," said Charity, running the breadths over with her eye, as an experienced surveyor would a strange piece of land; "is it to be short or long? Short; well then, I can do it by piecing, and them ruffles will be just the very thing to trim it with. It will make a sweet dress."

"That's for afternoons, croquet, etc., you know," said Theodora; "but *this* is what I expect to shine in," and she pulled off the cambric she had previously thrown over the blue silk.

"If ever I see a heavenly blue, there it is!" exclaimed Charity, "and none o' your sleazy, rowey stuffs either," — running it through her fingers, — "thick and soft; it's just as handsome as it can be; you couldn't find anything more prettier for you if you'd ransacked Boston. Come, Theodora, get out your linin's, I'm just achin' to go to work."

"I've got one more, Charity, that I *suppose* goes ahead of these, but, to tell you the truth, I don't think so. But here comes mother, she wants to show it to you, I know."

"Yes, indeed I do," said Mrs. Hartwell, "for I know you can appreciate it, which is more than I can say of Theodora. There, Charity, what do you think of that?"

Charity took off her spectacles, wiped them with her handkerchief, put them on again very deliberately, took one of the flounces in her hands, looked at it attentively, then peering over her glasses at Mrs. Hartwell remarked,

"A real Ingy and no mistake! Theodora Hartwell, you are lucky!"

"There, Theodora!" exclaimed her mother; "what did I tell you? I knew Charity would admire it the minute she saw it."

"And I expected she would too," replied Theodora, who was seated on the floor holding up one of the breadths of the blue silk so that the light should strike it, and eyeing it with evident satisfaction, "because you said it was something handsome, but I much prefer this; this suits me exactly."

"And it ought to," said Charity, "for it's as handsome as it can be; but then you know an Ingy's an Ingy, and can't be had for the askin'. But where shall I begin? Time's flyin'."

"The barège," said Theodora. "I like to begin at the little end always, and come out at the big."

"And a good rule too," said Charity, as she picked up the breadths and snipped away at them in a manner which would have been rather fearful to behold if it had not been for her evident confidence in the result. "Yes, a good rule," she repeated, nodding her head sagely. "I've seen too many people go in at the big end to believe in that practice; they get along pretty well till they get to the middle of the horn, but they find it pretty close quarters even then, and I tell you they get some pretty tight squeezin' afore they come out. There, Theodora, you jest piece that for me, please, and by the time you get it done I'll have these gores pinned together, so that you'll have nothin' to do but jest run 'em up. Now how'll you have your over-skirt? That one in the first plate is real pretty, I think; and it don't take so much material, you see, because it aint got a front breadth, and you know we've got to be economical."

"I like that very much indeed," said Theodora, turn-

ing over the leaves of the fashion-book; "it's very stylish, and yet it isn't all ruffles and puffs, — yes, I'll have that."

"Now that's all planned, and I'm to go straight ahead with it; if there's anything I do like, it's plain sailing. It was just like your ma to have all these things ripped up and ironed out before I came. I do wish some folks I work for would take pattern by her. I'll go to a house, say, to work two days; the bed's all piled up with dresses to be made over; not a stitch ripped. Of course, I can't fairly get started to work much before the middle of the day, and get flurried and flustered because every one of the girls wants *her* dress done first; and, consequently, nothing gets finished. I know well enough when they give me my money they don't think I've earned it, and *I* know I *have* ten times over; still there aint no satisfaction in it. I declare, it's enough to wear the flesh off one's bones. No wonder my face looks as sharp as a barber's razor."

"It is hard, Charity," said Mrs. Hartwell, in a tone of real sympathy, "and I don't see how people can be so inconsiderate."

"I don't suppose they know any better," said Charity, as she twitched her thread in and out; "and it aint likely they think I mind it, that is, the most of 'em, though *some* of 'em I really do think take a kind o' malicious pleasure in trying my patience. But them's the ones that don't make much by it. Folks that won't spare my feelin's, why, they mustn't expect that I shall put myself out much to spare theirs; though, to be sure, that aint livin' up to the golden rule, now, is it? However, we all of us find it easier to preach than to practise. Theodora, how long do you want your blue silk?"

"Oh, a train, of course," answered Theodora. "Just as long as you can get it out."

"Well, now, you just stand up, if you please," said Charity. "I've pieced these two breadths together, and I'll hold 'em up to you before I cut 'em. There, Mrs. Hartwell, what do you say to that? That's sixty inches, — a very pretty length; but perhaps Theodora'd prefer sixty-two."

"That's long enough, I am sure," said Mrs. Hartwell. "Surely, Theodora, you wouldn't have it any longer."

"Indeed I would, mamma," said Theodora, almost twisting her neck off in her endeavor to see behind her. "You know this is my party dress, and, of course, I want it in the fashion. Make it sixty-two, Charity; make it sixty-two."

"Well, we'll *say* sixty, and if my fingers slip a little, why, your ma won't say nothing; two or three inches one way or the other won't make much difference. There'll be enough of that Ingy muslin to put a flounce on the bottom of it, and on the over-skirt besides, and the over-skirt will do for that, and this too, and be just the handsomest thing you could have to wear with it. I once heard a lady say that 'black silk aprons was like charity, — they covered a multitude of sins;' but I think over-skirts has taken the shine right out of 'em."

"Charity," said Theodora, after she had been sewing for some time in silence, "to tell you the truth, my conscience is rather pricking me; I've got a confession to make. When mother suggested that I should have you for a week to get me ready for Scranton, I rather demurred, because — now prepare yourself, Charity — I was afraid you wouldn't make my things *quite* as stylish as I wanted them; not give them such an air, you know. But I take it all back now, for I don't see but what I am going to be turned out in the very tip of the mode; and, certainly, no fashionable dress-maker would have turned

and gored, and pieced and planned, as you have. There! now my mind is easier! I hope you're not offended, Charity?"

"Offended!" exclaimed Charity, looking at Theodora over the tops of her glasses, and pointing her remarks with a snap of her great shears. "Offended! When you see the sun rise in the west and set in the east; when two Sundays come together, and we have a snow-storm fourth o' July, *then* you'll see Charity Wiggott offended at such straightforward talk as that."

The business of dress-making progressed rapidly and successfully, and Theodora was all ready for her journey when her Uncle John arrived to escort her to Scranton, bringing with him a little note from his daughter Kate, profusely underlined, in which she said she was "*dreadfully* sorry she hadn't written before, but she had so many things to think of before going away for the summer, that she *entirely* forgot it; but she *knew* Theodora would excuse her, and they'd have a delightful time when they got to Scranton." Suffice it to say, that Theodora Hartwell started on her journey in the best possible spirits. Living, as she had from early childhood, in the country, the customs and manners of fashionable society were as unknown to her as if she had been nine instead of nineteen. True, she, of course, had some faint idea of what was going on there, from the letters of her Cousin Kate, who was three years older than herself; but these came at rare intervals, and she had always been too happy in her country home to long for the scenes which they depicted. But now, when she found she was actually going to taste of the sweets of a gayer life, she looked forward to the prospect before her with the delight of a child who is naturally pleased with anything which has about it the charms of novelty.

CHAPTER V.

AT SCRANTON.

“SCRANTON, July 18, 187-.

“DEAR MOTHER:—Of course, motherdy, the first epistle shall be to you, but all the rest of the family are welcome to any part, or all of it, if they wish. Here I am at Scranton! It is perfectly lovely. I don't know how I shall describe it to you, but I remember you have been here yourself, and although there have been a great many changes in the way of cottages, hotels, etc., since you were here, the beach and rocks, and all the natural features that would most interest you, must be the same.

“Uncle Jack's cottage is lovely, and Kate has no care at all, for Mrs. Brown, the house-keeper, is a delightful person, knows how and when to do everything, entertains every one whom Kate does not care to see, and leaves her nothing to do but enjoy herself, which she knows how to do to perfection. All the houses here are called cottages; but they don't look much like my idea of the 'love in a cottage' style, certainly. Uncle Jack's is called 'The Nest.' He gave it that name because it is the smallest house here, and is entirely covered with vines. I think it is the prettiest, because the most picturesque place here. The grounds are not extensive, but are kept in perfect order. On the right of the cottage is a croquet-ground, and the land at the left is laid out with flower-beds, while in the rear is a miniature grove; altogether I think it is lovely.

“The house next this on the right is only just finished, so of course the place has rather a new look, but it promises to be the finest one here; it is called Rockhaven. Dr. Drayton is the owner; he married a Miss Berkley of Boston; she used to be a great belle. Kate used to know her quite well, but has not seen her since her marriage, as she went abroad immediately after, and only came back this spring. Every one says she is beautiful, and, as Kate is going to call on her directly, I hope I shall get acquainted with her. Mr. John Simperton owns the place adjoining this on the left. It is very large, but not pretty; for although Mr. Simperton has more money than he can spend, he does not seem to have a taste for the beautiful. The house is expensive and solid-looking, but there are no flowers, or vines, or anything about it to make it look summerish. I believe there are two daughters, and only one son. So much for

our immediate neighbors. As I have only been here one night I can't give you much of an idea of the rest of the population.

"I went shopping with Kate the day I was in Boston, and bought me a sailor hat. I couldn't afford any of the fancy shapes, because they are so expensive, in the first place, and then they have to be trimmed with feathers and flowers, and all sorts of things, which cost a fortune; but my sailor just has a black velvet band on it with long ends behind, and a lovely little feather arrangement which sticks up on one side, and makes it very jaunty. Kate gave it to me; it came off of her last winter's bonnet. They have a laundress here, so my mind is at rest on the washing question. Kate is just calling me to go down to the beach and see them bathe; we are not going in to-day, as I want to have the fun of watching the others. I presume father will be very much horrified at the shallowness of this letter, but if I get into deeper water I'll write him. Tell Dick, if I see anything of that bat I mentioned, I'll send it by express.

"Love to every one, not forgetting Sarah and Joe, and your own dear self.

"From your ever affectionate daughter,

"THEODORA."

"Come, come, Theodora," called Kate Temple; "finish that letter. Father's going to drive to the office, and he'll leave us at the beach. The bathers must have all gone down by this time."

"I'm all ready," answered Theodora. "Oh, what magnificent horses, Uncle Jack! May I sit on the front seat with you and drive?"

"Yes, indeed, child; glad to have you," replied Mr. Temple. "In with you."

"Papa," said Kate, "there's Smythe Simperton coming down his avenue; please stop and take him in. Of course he's on his way to the beach. A good chance for you to captivate him, Theodora; he's a tremendous catch, and it's quite the thing to know him."

"Captivate him!" exclaimed Theodora, in a tone of contempt. "I shouldn't know how to go to work."

"Oh, you'll learn all the airs and graces fast enough," said Mr. Temple; "trust any girl for that; but I don't much believe you or any one else will ever captivate

Smythe Simperton; he is altogether too much captivated with himself to admire any one else. Look at him now, Theodora. Isn't he a fine specimen of manly beauty? Doesn't he look as if he'd set the river a-fire? Conceited little puppy!"

"O papa!" whispered Kate; "I'm afraid he'll hear you."

The gentleman who was the subject of these remarks was walking leisurely down the avenue of his father's residence, one thumb stuck in his pantaloons' pocket, the other twirling a dainty cane, which looked like a child's plaything. He was dressed in the height of the fashion, but with a studied carelessness that could hardly escape the eye of the most casual observer. A black velvet coat; white pants and vest; blue and white striped shirt; blue silk necktie, tied in a loose knot; a straw hat, around which was twisted a blue veil; and a button-hole bouquet of blue flowers, made up the sea-side negligé of this individual, who, in kitchen parlance, might be styled a "pretty man." Yes; that is just the name for him. No other expression could so well describe those meaningless features; that fair complexion and rosy cheeks, which, it was whispered, were never allowed to feel the touch of cold water; that mustache, waxed to such an extent that a cambric needle would be coarse in comparison; those soft, curly locks; and those delicate white hands, which, even at that early hour in the morning, and at a place where such conventionalities as gloves were quite disregarded, were encased in most exquisitely fitting "Alexanders."

As Mr. Temple drew up his horses at the gate, Mr. Simperton slightly quickened his steps, and, raising his hat, said with a drawl, which I shall not attempt to imitate:—

"Good-morning, Mr. Temple. Miss Temple, how do

you do? I am delighted to see you; I really am delighted, it's so nice to meet one's friends again, you know."

"Charming, isn't it?" replied Kate; "particularly after such a long separation. Mr. Simperton, I wish to introduce you to my cousin; Mr. Simperton, Miss Hartwell."

Mr. Simperton lifted his hat languidly, then put up his eye-glass, and surveyed Theodora as if she were some object in nature or art put up for his especial inspection. Theodora did not at all fancy his manner, and, returning his bow with a very dignified inclination of her head, turned towards her uncle, who had been watching her face with an amused expression on his own, and commenced talking with him with an air of such perfect indifference to the charms of Mr. Simperton, that no one could possibly doubt its sincerity.

"We are on our way to the beach," said Kate; "won't you take this vacant seat?"

"Yes, get in, Simperton," said Mr. Temple; "I'm going round to the village, and am going to drop the ladies on the way."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Simperton, as he got into the carriage. "I really ought not to do it, you know, because I'm under the doctor's care, and one of his most particular directions is, that I shall take any quantity of exercise."

"So that accounts for the fact of your not *riding* to the beach," said Kate. "I thought it was something remarkable. But you don't mean to say that you've left your lovely grays in the city?"

"Oh, no, I couldn't go anywhere without them, you know. I shall drive every evening."

"Theodora, you must see Mr. Simperton's grays," said Kate; "they are superb."

"I should like to see them very much," replied Theodora, slightly turning her head as she spoke; "but I don't think I could possibly admire them more than I do Uncle John's chestnuts."

"Is your cousin fond of horse-flesh?" drawled Mr. Simperton.

"She appears to be," said Kate; "but you must ask her."

"Miss Hartshorn," he asked, leaning forward very slightly towards Theodora, "are you fond of horse-flesh?"

"I never ate any," replied Theodora, rather shortly.

Mr. Simperton looked rather nonplussed. "Oh! I did not mean in that way, you know; I used the language of the turf."

"As I am not a horse-jockey, you will please excuse me if I don't understand you," replied Theodora, pretending to be so busy managing the horses as to be obliged to look straight before her, but saying under her breath so that no one but her uncle heard her, "Hartshorn indeed! how stupid!"

Mr. Simperton, not being at all used to rebuffs from the fair sex, looked upon Theodora's indifference as a want of appreciation, and immediately set her down in his own mind as an unsophisticated school-girl, whose acquaintance it really was not worth the while to cultivate, so devoted himself to Kate for the rest of the drive.

"O Kate, look!" exclaimed Theodora, with an animation that very much surprised Mr. Simperton; "there's the beach!"

"Yes, and every one is there. There's the Grahams' carriage, and the Daltons', and the Drydens', and every body we know; we'll get out here, papa."

As the carriage stopped, two gentlemen stepped for-

ward and assisted the ladies to alight, before Mr. Simperton's languid movement had enabled him to do so.

"I am so glad to see you, Miss Kate!" exclaimed the younger gentleman, a handsome fellow about twenty years old, as he held out his hand to Kate; "I had begun to think you were not coming this summer."

"Oh, no danger of that, Harry," said Kate, shaking hands with him very cordially, — "Mr. Dalton, Miss Hartwell."

Mr. Dalton bowed. "But where are your bathing-dresses, Miss Kate?" he asked. "I'm all ready to carry them for you."

"We are not going to bathe this morning," answered Kate. "My cousin has never been to the beach before, so we thought we would have the fun of looking on."

"Indeed, it will be fun for Miss Hartwell," said Mr. Dalton; "for a more ridiculous sight than a lot of people just as they come out of the water I defy anybody to find."

"It must be very absurd," replied Theodora. "I should think they would look very much like drowned rats."

"That's just what they do," laughed Mr. Dalton; "and very poor specimens at that. Where shall we go, Miss Kate, — to the ledge?"

"Oh, yes, by all means," answered Kate. "That is the best place to watch the bathers. Don't you think so, Mr. Simperton?"

"Oh, anywhere," drawled Mr. Simperton. "It doesn't make any difference to me, you know. I've seen people bathe before."

"So have I," replied Kate. "But I have by no means lost my relish for the sight. There is always some one, or something, to make it interesting every year."

"Where's Thurston, I wonder?" exclaimed Mr. Dal-

ton, looking about for his friend, as they walked on. "Oh, there he is talking with your father. Thurston, we're going to the ledge to watch the bathers. Are you going in, or will you come with us?"

"I'll go with you," called back his friend, bowing to Mr. Temple as he drove off, and hurrying down to the beach to join the others.

Kate presented him to her cousin, and then the party started for the ledge, — a high crest of rocks, over which a few struggling trees spread their branches, and which was always the "grand stand" for those lookers-on who did not remain in their carriages.

"Isn't this salt air perfectly delightful?" exclaimed Theodora. "It makes me feel like a wild creature. How I should like a good run on this smooth beach!"

"Come, let's try it," said Mr. Dalton. "I should like nothing better;" and, suiting the action to the word, they both started at full speed, like two children, Dalton shouting over his shoulder as they left the others, "No reserved seats. We shall get the best of you."

Rushing along in the fresh morning breeze, her two braids of shining hair flying behind her, her cheeks bright as roses, and eyes dancing with fun, utterly unconscious of the fact that scores of eyes were on her, Theodora looked the perfect picture of health, youth, and beauty. Several dainty maidens shrugged their shoulders, elevated their eyebrows, and looked elegantly shocked as the two ran past them, while the eyes of the gentlemen followed them with evident admiration.

Quite out of breath, but laughing and chatting in the easiest manner possible, they reached the foot of the ledge, and climbing about half-way up, stopped to rest on a projecting rock on which sat an elderly gentleman, who called to Mr. Dalton as they came up: "I envy you, Harry. I've been watching you ever since you

started. I'd give a thousand dollars if I could start off and take such a run as you and your friend have just had."

"I tell you, it was just jolly!" replied Harry, in a boyish way, that was refreshing to hear. "Miss Hartwell, Mr. Hudson."

"Hartwell! Hartwell!" exclaimed the old gentleman, smiling, and offering his hand. "I wonder, now, if you can be any relation to an old classmate of mine, Richard Hartwell."

"Why, he's my father," replied Theodora, with evident delight, returning Mr. Hudson's shake of the hand with energy.

"Is that really so?" said Mr. Hudson. "I am delighted to meet you! delighted! Your father and I were chums in college. The last time I saw him was on his wedding-day. I have been wandering all over the world since then, and have quite lost sight of him. Is he here?"

"Oh, no," said Theodora, "he is at home. I am here with my uncle, Mr. Temple."

"I remember him perfectly," said Mr. Hudson, "although I knew him very slightly; but your mother, Theodora Temple, — ah! she was a woman worth looking at more than once! I knew her very well. In fact, I didn't know but Sam Hudson, instead of Dick Hartwell, would have her for his wife; but that time your father got ahead of me."

"Why, are you Sam Hudson?" asked Theodora, in a tone of great surprise; "and were you one of my mother's groomsmen?"

"To be sure I was," said Mr. Hudson. "So you've heard of me before?"

"Oh, yes," said Theodora. "There's nothing I like better than getting mother to talk about 'old times,' and

what she did when she was a girl. She's often spoken of Sam Hudson; but I didn't suppose you were the one."

"Of course you didn't," said Mr. Hudson. "I've no doubt you thought of him as quite a gay young man, and couldn't associate him in your mind with such an old fellow as myself. Well, he was a gay young man once, quite a beau in his way, so *he* used to think; but time, my dear, time makes sad work with us boys by the time we're sixty or so. However, we'll be good friends in memory of those same 'old times' you're so fond of hearing about."

"Indeed we will," said Theodora, sincerely. "I think I should like you any way; but if you are one of father's and mother's old friends, why, I shall like you all the more."

"Then it's a bargain," said Mr. Hudson, "and Harry shall be witness. How long have you two known each other?"

Harry Dalton glanced at Theodora with an amused expression as he answered, "Just about twenty minutes, Mr. Hudson; but I've known her cousin, Miss Temple, ever since I was a little shaver, and have often heard of Miss Hartwell; so you see I don't feel as if we were strangers. There comes Miss Temple now, with Thurston Lee; and Smythe Simperton brings up the rear. By Jove! aren't they a handsome couple?"

"So that's Miss Temple, is it?" said Mr. Hudson. "Yes, she is handsome, and wonderfully like her father when I knew him."

"Do look at Simperton," said Harry; "now wouldn't you think, by that exhausted air he puts on, that he was climbing Mount Blanc?"

"He is an invalid, isn't he?" asked Theodora; "he said something about being under the doctor's care."

"An invalid!" exclaimed Harry, contemptuously; "so that's his latest go, is it? He tries a new dodge every season, to make himself more interesting; last year he had the sporting fever, and talked about his guns and his 'dawgs,' and his shooting-box, and sprinkled his conversation with all sorts of sportsman-like phrases, though I don't believe he could hit a cow at forty paces if he tried. I'd be willing to set myself up for his target."

"How you did run!" said Kate, as she and the gentlemen reached the rock on which the others stood. "I wish you could have seen yourself; you looked like a little girl just let loose from school."

"And I feel like one," said Theodora, drawing a long breath; "not that I have been under school restraint, by any means, but there is something in this air that makes me feel like another creature; so if I do anything horrible and shocking I'm not responsible for it."

"If people are shocked at the sight of a young girl with strength and life enough for such a good run as you have just taken, it is a pity they couldn't be shocked a little oftener, so as to get used to it," said Mr. Hudson.

"Thank you, Mr. Hudson," laughed Theodora. "But, Kate, this gentleman is an old friend of father's, and used to know Uncle Jack too, and was one of mother's groomsmen, — only think of that!"

"I suppose we are to consider that an introduction," laughed Mr. Hudson, extending his hand cordially to Kate; "and very glad I am to meet you."

"Thank you," replied Kate, with equal cordiality. "Papa will be glad to see you, sir. Are you here for the summer?"

"Yes, I am with the Daltons, by Harry's invitation," laughed Mr. Hudson; "he and I are just of an age."

"Thanks, Mr. Hudson," said Harry. "That's the greatest compliment I ever had paid me."

"I'm glad you think so," replied Mr. Hudson.

"I say, Hudson," drawled Smythe Simperton, "don't you find this thing rather slow after Brighton, you know?"

"No, Mr. Simperton," replied Mr. Hudson, in a dignified tone; "I do not."

"But, then," continued Simperton, apparently oblivious to the chilliness of Mr. Hudson's tone and manner, "we Americans don't do things up as the English do. Scranton makes a deuced poor show side of Brighton."

"Not in my opinion," replied Mr. Hudson; "in some respects they are altogether too much alike to suit me; one finds the same percentage of fools at either place. Miss Temple, I think you will find this place rather pleasanter."

"Simperton will find he can't try the familiar dodge with Mr. Hudson," said Harry Dalton, in an undertone to Theodora; "he's not the man to stand it."

"I shouldn't think he would," exclaimed Theodora, indignantly. "Hudson! Outrageous! I never heard such impertinence. He didn't speak so to Uncle Jack."

"I guess he didn't," replied Harry. "Mr. Temple is another who wouldn't put up with it; but, as a general thing, Simperton does and says just what he pleases, and no one thinks anything about it, just because *he* does it. But Mr. Hudson gave him rather a severe hit just now."

"He didn't notice it," replied Theodora.

"Yes, he did, I'm sure," said Harry; "he's not such a fool as he sometimes seems, but he wouldn't appear to think that any one *could* snub him. "See!" he cried, speaking now to every one, "there comes a squad of bathers!"

"Oh, don't they look pretty?" cried Theodora. "Why, some of them are lovely, and not at all ridiculous, as I expected they would be."

"Just wait until you see them come out," said Thurston Lee; "that's the time to judge. Bathing is a terrible test of feminine beauty; young ladies leave their back hair in the bath-houses, and crimps and frizzes are ruthlessly tucked under oil-skin caps, which, however useful, can hardly be said to be becoming."

"Mr. Lee, you're a slanderer," said Kate; "I shan't listen to such imputations against my sex. You should take it for granted that a young lady's back hair is all her own, and not make such dreadful insinuations; believe your eyes and not your ears."

"If I didn't believe my eyes," laughed Mr. Lee, "I shouldn't make such apparently rash statements. When every other shop-window is filled with braids, curls, switches, chignons, and mercy knows what not in the hair line, it is fair to suppose that ladies must wear such things. If they don't, all I can say is, that the commercial interests of the country are in a most hazardous condition, and half the shopkeepers in Boston are likely to become bankrupt."

"We won't discuss the subject," said Kate, assuming an air of injured dignity, and exclaiming the next instant, "Oh, who is that lady coming from the bath-house on the left? — the lady with the black and white striped dress, trimmed with blue, and that picturesque hat; how very pretty she looks from here!"

"Oh, that's Mrs. Drayton," said Smythe Simperton; "haven't you seen her? She's all the rage, you know."

"Is that Marion Drayton?" asked Kate. "I wish I could get a good look at her face, I used to know her before she was married; she was very beautiful then."

"She has changed very little," said Mr. Lee; "if anything she is handsomer than ever, more womanly-looking. You know she is but twenty-four now. I think her decidedly the handsomest lady here."

"Who's that, Thurston?" asked Harry, — "Mrs. Drayton?"

"Yes, Miss Temple was just asking me about her."

"I tell you she's stunning, Miss Kate," cried Harry, in his outspoken way. "And isn't the doctor handsome? I just like to see those two together. There's the doctor, now, going in with his boy in his arms; just the cunningest little chap you ever saw; not a bit afraid of the water, and he's only three years old. I saw him the first time his father ducked him, and he never squalled once."

"Mrs. Drayton is a most charming woman," said Mr. Hudson; "I met her in Berlin last year, and saw a great deal of her; the doctor I knew several years before that, when he had charge of the hospital. Is Miss Drayton with them?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Lee; "there she is, just going in, — the lady with the gray dress, with scarlet trimming. There, she has just stopped to speak to her brother; her profile is turned towards us."

"Oh, yes; and a very handsome one it is too. She was in mourning when I saw her; red is very becoming to her. What a perfect contrast she is to her sister-in-law! — she is so dark, and Mrs. Drayton so fair, a *blonde aux yeux bruns*."

"Miss Drayton is really a catch, you know," now spoke up Mr. Simperton, who had remained silent for some time, with his eyes half closed and the end of his cane in his mouth; "any amount of money in her own right, — millions. If it wasn't that I haven't energy enough to come the heavy devoted, and never *can* get smashed, I should go in, you know."

"Perhaps you'd come out again," said Harry Dalton.

"Perhaps," drawled Mr. Simperton, in a tone that plainly showed he had no doubts as to his own powers of fascination.

"See!" cried Theodora, "Mrs. Drayton is swimming; doesn't she strike out splendidly?"

"By Jove! she does," exclaimed Harry; "cuts right through like a man. But then she does everything better than any woman *I* ever saw, — drives, dances, bowls, rows, plays, talks, —"

"Most every woman can do *that*, you know," drawled Simperton.

"Yes, but every woman can't do it as she does: when she talks, she says something worth hearing. I don't mean by that that she sits up and preaches. She's up to any amount of fun, but she's never silly; and she could sit down on that beach and make sand-pies with those children, and seem just about as old as they are, and the next minute entertain a bevy of old ladies, or like as not a squad of professors. I tell you she's a remarkable woman."

"Why, really, Harry, you are very enthusiastic," laughed Kate. "I shall have to renew my acquaintance with Mrs. Drayton, if for no other reason than to see if she is all you have represented. If she has many such ardent admirers I should think the doctor would be jealous."

"No danger of that," replied Harry. "They are the most devoted couple in the world; not a bit spooney, but any one can see they think more of each other and their boy than all the rest of the world put together. Mrs. Drayton created quite a sensation when she first came down, because she really is so handsome; and lots of men commenced paying her attentions, and tried to flirt with her, but they soon found out that *that* wasn't her style. She was polite and charming to all, with the exception of a few who were too fast for her to even countenance; but she never allows any attentions that could be considered at all marked, and the consequence is that all the gentlemen respect her a great deal more than if she let them dawdle round her all the time."

"Yes, Dr. and Mrs. Drayton are quite a contrast to some of the young married couples here," quietly remarked Thurston Lee.

"Oh, conjugal devotion has gone out of fashion, you know," drawled Smythe Simperton. "Nobody believes in the Darby and Joan style nowadays; that sort of thing does very well for old fogies, but the young couples of the present generation won't subscribe to it."

No one made any reply to Mr. Simperton's remark, although Mr. Hudson looked at him with an expression of contempt, which changed to one of amusement as he glanced at Theodora, and noticed the expression of infinite scorn and disgust with which she looked upon that noble specimen of the young men of the nineteenth century.

The bathers having almost all come out of the water and gone to their bath-houses, Kate proposed that their party should go down on the beach and meet some of their friends, which they accordingly did, Kate walking with Mr. Lee and Smythe Simperton, and Theodora with Mr. Hudson and Harry Dalton. As they reached the base of the rocks they came suddenly upon a party of bathers who had just issued from the neighboring bath-houses. At sight of them Harry Dalton exclaimed:—

"There is Mrs. Drayton now; isn't she lovely?"

Before Theodora could reply, Mrs. Drayton had turned towards them, and, seeing Mr. Hudson, made a little impetuous movement, exclaiming, as she held out both hands and came towards him:—

"Mr. Hudson! how very glad I am to see you! where did you come from? I thought you were in Egypt by this time."

"And so I expected to have been," said Mr. Hudson, returning her greeting with equal warmth; "but I

was called home quite unexpectedly. I did not think, however, that we should run into each other again so soon. I hear you have a fine place here, Mrs. Drayton."

"It will be beautiful in time," replied Mrs. Drayton; "as yet it has rather a new look, although we have kept as many of the natural beauties about it as possible. But, Mr. Hudson, I shan't think of letting you stay at the hotel when I have a house of my own. I insist upon your coming to us. Robert," — turning to her husband, who had just come up, — "here is your old friend, Mr. Hudson. I am trying to make him desert the hotel for Rockhaven."

"Mr. Hudson!" exclaimed Dr. Drayton, quite as much surprised as his wife had been. "I can hardly believe my eyes. I thought you were thousands of miles away. Of course you will come to us; I shan't take no for an answer."

"My dear sir, I am afraid you will have to, for I am not at the hotel. I am visiting the Daltons; here is Harry right behind me."

"Harry Dalton?" said Mrs. Drayton. "Why, I beg your pardon, Mr. Dalton. I was so surprised and delighted at meeting Mr. Hudson, that I confess I did not notice who his friends were. Good-morning, Mr. Lee. Mr. Simperton, how do you do this morning? — exhausted after your walk to the beach?"

"Thank you for your interest in my health, Mrs. Drayton," said Simperton, with his usual drawl; "but I rode down this morning. I was so fortunate as to be picked up by an old friend of yours, Miss Temple."

"I fear Mrs. Drayton does not remember me," said Kate, coming forward; "she was Marion Berkley when I knew her."

"Remember you? Why, of course I do; you are

Kate Temple, and I am so glad to see you. You don't know how pleasant it is to meet my old friends after having been away so long. Is this your sister?"

"No, my cousin, Miss Hartwell; she is spending the summer with me."

"I am very glad to hear that," said Mrs. Drayton, addressing herself to Theodora; "for Mr. Temple's cottage is next to ours, and I like to be near people with whom I can be neighborly. I hope you and Miss Temple will not be ceremonious and confine your visits to formal calls."

"I never made a formal call in my life," laughingly replied Theodora.

"So much the better," replied Mrs. Drayton; "and I positively forbid you to commence the practice with me. You did not bathe this morning, Miss Temple?"

"No, as this is our first morning my cousin thought she should prefer to look on."

"You see it is all new to me, Mrs. Drayton," said Theodora. "I have never been to a beach before; that is, since I was a little girl."

"Oh, then, of course you will enjoy it all the more; but you mustn't sit on the rocks again and laugh at us poor creatures as we come out of the water. It isn't fair; besides, you must learn to swim; I know you would like it. Mr. Dalton, don't you think you could teach her?"

"Indeed I do, if she will only allow me the pleasure of trying."

"I shall be only too thankful to any one who will take the trouble; but I'm afraid you'll soon get tired, for I don't believe I could ever learn."

"Oh, yes, you will, if you have confidence," said Mrs. Drayton; "to-morrow morning you must take your first lesson."

"Marion," said Dr. Drayton, speaking to his wife, and raising his hat to the other ladies, "did you order the carriage to come for you, or are you going to walk?"

"Oh, walk, by all means. Robert, I want to introduce you to Miss Temple, and her cousin, Miss Hartwell."

"Miss Temple, of The Nest?" asked Dr. Drayton of Kate.

"Yes," answered Kate; "you see we are near neighbors."

"Isn't it delightful, Robert?" said Mrs. Drayton. "Now all my fears in regard to its occupants are set at rest. You must know, Miss Temple, that I have been watching the windows of your house for at least two weeks, waiting for some signs of life, and never dreamed that the Mr. Temple who owned it was father of an old acquaintance of mine; though if I had made any inquiries, of course I should have found out at once."

"Have you any plans for the morning's amusement?" asked Dr. Drayton of his wife; "if not, suppose you invite your friends to look at some photographs and engravings that came down yesterday. I unpacked them just before we left the house."

"Oh, will you come?" asked Mrs. Drayton, including the whole party by her tone and manner; "they are lovely pictures, — some of them photographs of views abroad, and some really beautiful engravings. Mr. Hudson, there is a Toschi, — that I know will be enough to bring you."

"Mrs. Drayton, you have found out my weakness. I acknowledge the powers of the Toschi, and am only too glad to yield to them."

"Miss Temple, Miss Hartwell, all of you, — what do you say? Will you spend the morning at Roekhaven?"

As every one readily accepted Mrs. Drayton's invitation, the party proceeded leisurely to her house. The drawing-

room at Rockhaven was very large, opening with French windows on to a piazza that extended round three sides of the house; the floor was of polished inlaid wood; delicate lace curtains hung from the windows, and the furniture was almost entirely of light, foreign wicker-work. A grand piano stood at one end of the room, and here and there were small tables, each one a work of art in itself, holding exquisite ornaments or curiosities, and vases of flowers. There was nothing heavy or oppressive about the room; the walls were delicately frescoed, and the pictures, with the exception of two landscapes in oil, were all choice engravings in delicate frames. It was eminently a summer-room, and no one could enter it without a feeling of delight at the delicious sense of coolness that pervaded the apartment. As soon as her guests were seated Mrs. Drayton removed the ornaments from two or three of the tables, and Dr. Drayton spread upon them his photographs, which some of the party examined at their leisure, while others entertained themselves with music, or walked up and down the broad piazza.

CHAPTER VI.

THEODORA REALIZES THE TRUTH OF AN OLD PROVERB.

"SUPPOSE we take our books out into the grove," said Kate to Theodora, a few days after the latter's arrival at Scranton; "it's delightfully cool there, and it's too soon after dinner for any interruptions. All Scranton takes a nap in the middle of the afternoon."

"I am agreeable to anything," replied Theodora; "particularly a hammock."

"Come on, then; get a book. I don't imagine we shall either of us do much reading; but perhaps it will put us asleep. Take a hair cushion off the piazza sofa. I always want one in the hammock."

"What a luxurious creature you are, every way!" said Theodora, as she followed her cousin to the grove, with a book in her hand and a cushion under her arm. "You always seem to have and to do everything in the most comfortable way possible. Do you expect to go through life with all the corners rounded and the hard places padded for your especial benefit?"

"Theodora, don't moralize in July, I beg of you," replied Kate, as she dexterously settled herself in her hammock. "All I know at the present moment is, that I much prefer having a hair cushion under my head to Manilla twine."

"Now, I should just like to know how you got into that thing?" exclaimed Theodora, as she watched Kate, who

was lazily swinging back and forth in her hammock, which was hung so low that she could just touch the tips of her toes to the ground. "It looks rather precarious to me."

"Spread it out with your right hand, keep your skirts in place with your left; sit down, and then put your feet up. It requires some practice to do it gracefully, but it's a very easy thing after you once know how."

"There!" as Theodora, after a few unsuccessful attempts, and sundry demonstrations with both hands and feet, at last managed to extend herself in the hammock. "I've seen it done worse, and I've seen it done better. You'll get it to perfection in time. I wish you'd been here one day last summer. I never laughed so in my life. Smythe Simperton was here, and I asked him if he would not like to try the hammock. You know he prides himself on his grace, and the elegance with which he does everything, no matter what. Well, whether he thought the weight of his body would spread the hammock, or what his idea was, I can't say; but he sat right down in it without opening it, put his feet up, and of course rolled out the other side. I wish you could have seen the expression of his face when he got up. I never saw anything equal to it in my life. I had a friend staying with me then, to whom he was quite devoted, and she was out here too; we couldn't keep from laughing, to save our lives, although it was rude, and I will give Mr. Simperton credit for behaving beautifully, for after the first shock was over he joined in the laugh, and pretended to think it a good joke. Fan told him she hoped he did not intend to give it up so soon, and he said, 'No, indeed,' and made another attempt, and that time succeeded in getting in; but the fates were against him, for the very instant that he got fairly settled, and was flourishing his hand at us in triumph, the rope broke, and down he

came. Fan fairly screamed with laughter, although I shook my finger at her, and tried my best to keep her still, notwithstanding I was almost choking myself. You may be pretty sure he didn't try it again; and if Fan ever wanted to torment him, she only had to say 'hammock,' and he turned every color in the rainbow."

"It just served him right," exclaimed Theodora, who laughed heartily at Kate's account of Mr. Simperton's mishap. "A sensible man would not have been tormented; he would have treated the whole thing as a good joke, and not cared two pins what any one said about it. I can't endure him, Kate; I haven't taken any more notice of him than I could possibly help, for, really, his drawling tone and patronizing manner are more than I can stand."

"Oh, nobody minds being patronized by Smythe Simperton," laughed Kate, turning over the leaves of her book with a languid air. "Of course, we all know he affects that sort of thing; he knows we see through it perfectly, and probably enjoys it all the more on that account; besides, there are plenty of mammas, and papas too, who will stand being patronized by him, on account of their daughters, my dear. There are any number of girls whom Smythe Simperton has every reason to feel perfectly sure he could have for the asking."

"Then the girls must be wanting in every particle of common sense, and their fathers and mothers something worse," exclaimed Theodora. "I should like to know what in the world Smythe Simperton has to boast of as an attraction."

"Money and a position," quietly replied Kate, who thoroughly enjoyed rousing her excitable little cousin, — "two things of which all the young ladies of the present day fully appreciate the value."

"Don't say *all*, Kate," replied Theodora, "don't say

all. I for one should be ashamed to marry any man from any such motives. I can't bear to hear you talk so, and I don't believe you mean half you say. I wouldn't marry a man if he were King of England, unless I loved him and he loved me."

"I'm not so sure of that," replied Kate, suppressing a smile; "although I confess that as yet you have wasted your opportunities, for I really depended on your captivating Smythe Simperton."

"Smythe Simperton! Call him Simpleton and done with it; it's by far the most appropriate. Don't mention his name to me again, I beg of you, or I shall be disgusted. Nothing would induce me to talk with him for five minutes, much less to attempt to captivate him; and with all respect to you, Kate, I should prefer to change the conversation, for I don't think it has been either lady-like or instructive."

"I suppose it does shock your ideas of propriety," replied Kate, good-humoredly; "but nevertheless young ladies will discuss such things. However, I'll spare your feelings, and devote myself to my book."

"What's that?" exclaimed Theodora, a moment or two after; "don't I smell tobacco-smoke?"

"Your imagination, I guess," replied Kate, tossing her book on the ground, and closing her eyes for a nap. "I left papa asleep on the lounge in the library."

"It isn't my imagination; I certainly smell tobacco-smoke. There! I hear voices distinctly; it's some gentlemen. Do you suppose they are coming here?"

Kate raised herself on her elbow and listened, as the voices grew more and more distinct. "'Sh!" she whispered, raising her finger warningly. "Speak of angels, and their wings you'll hear; talk of—we'll omit the rest. It's Smythe Simperton and some one else walking round his place. They can't see us, the hedge is so

high. Don't say a word, or they'll hear us and come over."

The voices could now be heard so plainly that the girls could distinguish to whom they belonged. Kate leaned towards Theodora and motioned with her lips, "Smythe Simperton, Thurston Lee, and Jack Hasbroucke." Theodora nodded.

The gentlemen halted in their walk directly opposite the place where Theodora and Kate swung in their hammocks. "Let's sit down here," they heard Smythe Simperton say; "it's deuced stupid walking round this hot afternoon. Have a light, Lee?"

"Thanks," replied Thurston Lee. "Simp., I should hardly think in your present weak state of health, you could stand such strong cigars."

"Oh, any amount of smoking never hurts me; in fact, it has a soothing influence on my nerves, you know."

"I should think you would need something to quiet you," remarked Mr. Hasbroucke; "you are naturally of such an excitable temperament."

Mr. Simperton made no reply to Mr. Hasbroucke's evidently ironical speech, and the latter continued: "See much of the Temples? You're very near neighbors."

"Oh, yes, I'm over there quite often," replied Simperton; "as often as I go anywhere. I don't pretend to call, you know."

"Call," replied Mr. Hasbroucke; "no one calls here, — nothing so ceremonious as that; just friendly sort of droppings-in, — that's what I like about Scranton. I thought you and Miss Temple were great friends."

"Oh, we are," drawled Smythe. "I always liked her; all the better, I think, because she never troubled me by falling in love with me. Yes, Kate's a nice girl."

Theodora's eyes flashed at the familiar, patronizing tone Mr. Simperton used, but Kate only shrugged her

shoulders, and appeared to be very much amused, listening intently as Thurston Lee's quiet voice was heard replying, "Altogether *too* nice a girl to be spoken of quite so disrespectfully, I should say."

"Who is that Miss Hartwell?" asked Jack Hasbroucke, as Simperton smoked on in sublime indifference to Mr. Lee's remark; "do you know her, Thurston?"

"Yes, I was introduced the first morning after her arrival. She is a cousin of Miss Temple's; a bright, pretty little thing, delightfully fresh and unsophisticated."

Theodora blushed, as she sat leaning forward in the hammock at the risk of losing her balance, and Kate could not help whispering, "Tremendous! coming from that quarter; now for Smythe's opinion."

Theodora tossed her head disdainfully, but nevertheless waited for Mr. Simperton's reply, which was some time in coming, as the comments of the gentlemen were evidently made between long puffs at their cigars. At last it came: "Delightfully green, you mean."

Theodora's head went higher than ever.

"Indeed, I don't mean anything of the kind," replied Mr. Lee. "I meant just what I said,—delightfully fresh and unsophisticated. She's anything but green, I can tell you; as you will find to your cost, if you try any of your usual blandishments on her."

"I assure you I have no idea of wasting any of my ammunition in that quarter," answered Mr. Simperton, with his accustomed languor. "She's not my style; nothing but a little, pert school-girl. Did you see her the first morning she was here, racing on the beach with Harry Dalton? A pretty figure she cut! What did you think of that performance, Lee?"

"I confess it was not exactly the thing. I shouldn't care to have a sister of mine make herself equally conspicuous; but I think Miss Hartwell did it from the impulse

of the moment, and was perfectly unconscious that there was anything out of the way in it. But she looked mighty pretty, I can tell you, Hasbroucke; you wouldn't have thought her a day over fourteen years old. That way of wearing her hair in those long braids makes her look younger than she probably is."

"Oh, I presume she's sweet sixteen," drawled Smythe Simperton,— "the most insipid of all ages."

"Why, I thought you were always rather inclined to take up young ladies their first season out," said Jack Hasbroucke.

"Well, yes, I do enjoy that sort of thing. It is rather interesting to watch their first attempts at enslaving our sex, and their gushing enthusiasm is very amusing; but this one,— why, I don't believe she is out; and then she's no style, you know."

"I thought she was very pretty and very fascinating," said Mr. Hasbroucke. "I watched her for half an hour this morning, while she was talking with Harry Dalton, and I own I almost lost my heart in those dimples of hers."

"Dimples! pshaw!" said Mr. Simperton; "I didn't know she had any. But that's just the style of beauty that takes with some of you fellows. I like something of a different type, something more Junoesque; little girls with pug noses I don't patronize."

"For my part, I think we have discussed the young ladies quite enough," remarked Thurston Lee.

"Yes, much more than the subject is worth, by Jove!" replied Smythe Simperton, with more than his usual energy. "Suppose we try something more interesting, and go and take a look at the horses."

The three gentlemen rose and walked off, and as their voices died away in the distance, Kate burst into a hearty fit of laughter, exclaiming, as she drew a long breath, "Certainly, there never was a truer saying than that

listeners never hear any good of themselves. We couldn't very well have helped it, but we certainly have been sufficiently punished. Theodora, what do you think of Smythe Simperton now?"

"Just what I did before!" replied Theodora, indignantly. "My opinion of him was so poor that it could not possibly be made any worse. 'Little girls with pug noses,' indeed! Shouldn't I like to pay him for that?"

"Try it," said Kate, laughing harder than ever; "if you've fascinated Jack Hasbroucke, there's no knowing what triumphs may be in store for you."

"So I made myself conspicuous, did I?" said Theodora, in a tone of chagrin, paying no attention to Kate's remark. "Why didn't you tell me it wasn't proper to run so? But I might have known it myself. I declare, I'll turn my braids up this very day, and never let them down again. I'll walk as if I were a jointed doll, and never turn my face to the right or left, speak only when I'm spoken to, and *then* I suppose there'll be no danger of my shocking any one. The prospect looks enlivening, I must confess. I wish I was at home!"

"Oh, that is not polite!" said Kate, laughing heartily; "you know you don't mean half you say. But, honestly, I do think it would be better if you dressed your hair a little more like other young ladies of your age, to say nothing of abandoning foot-races for the rest of the summer."

"Don't say another word, I beg of you!" cried Theodora, holding up her hands entreatingly. "I won't shock you again; you needn't be frightened. Come, I've had enough of this grove for one day; come into the house, do, and show me how to put up my back hair."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. SIMPERTON EXPERIENCES A NOVEL SENSATION.

“SCRANTON, August 20, 187-.

DEAR MOTHER :—In my last letter to Dick, I believe I mentioned our picnic, which was to come off the following day. It passed off splendidly, as everything always does that Mrs. Drayton has anything to do with. We went in four large row-boats, the gentlemen rowing, of course ; only once in a while being relieved (?) by a lady. I went in the boat with Mrs. Drayton, Miss Sarah Brown, who is visiting at Rockhaven, Mr. Hasbroucke, Mr. Dalton, and Mr. Simperton. Mr. Hasbroucke, Mr. Dalton, and I did the rowing, as Mr. S. could not get up energy enough for so much exertion, or else didn't know how. It was the loveliest day we could possibly have had, just warm enough, and everybody seemed in the best of spirits. The row up the river was perfectly charming. We went up about three miles, to Silver Springs, where we got out and had our lunch, wandered about the woods, and had a delightful time generally. Dr. Heinicken took his guitar with him. He has a very fine voice, and knows how to use it, and is very obliging. I forgot to tell you about Dr. Heinicken ; he has only been here a week, but we all like him ever so much. He is a young German physician, and is head surgeon of a hospital in Berlin, the same hospital Dr. Drayton was in when he lived in Germany. When Dr. Drayton went abroad, directly after his marriage, his niece, Rachel, went with him. They spent the winter in Berlin. Dr. H. and Rachel fell in love with each other, and are to be married this fall ; and the best part of the whole thing is that he has nothing in the world but his salary, and she is immensely wealthy. Things do come out sometimes just as they ought, don't they ? But I forgot to say that Dr. Drayton, —who had always given his services to the hospital, for it was a charitable institution, —when he left Berlin, gave a sum of money to the trustees, the interest of which was to pay a handsome salary to the surgeon who took his place, and now that same surgeon is going to marry his sister. I call that romantic.

“The grand ‘hop’ of the season, so far, came off last Saturday night, and I had a perfectly splendid time. Kate has been teaching me how to dance ever since I have been here, so that I got on beautifully and didn't make myself ridiculous, as I feared I might. I wore

my white muslin, the over-skirt looped up with ferns, and a wreath of them in my hair. Altogether I was quite satisfied with my personal appearance, although I felt rather insignificant beside Kate, who is one of the handsomest girls here. Her nose must make mine look *pugger* than ever, and she is *so* tall; but then my train relieved my feelings immensely, and, wonderful to relate, I didn't stumble over it and break my neck, as I fully expected I should. I did tear a piece out of the hem; but I mended it so that you would never know it. Perhaps you will be glad to know that Mrs. Drayton admired the 'Ingy;' thought it was the handsomest one she ever saw: tell that to Charity. Mrs. D. is the loveliest woman I ever knew. I thought her the belle of the 'hop'. The doctor does not dance, but enjoys seeing his wife. He always goes whenever she does, and she makes him sit behind her, and talks to him quite as much as to her partner.

"We go to a croquet-party at Rockhaven this afternoon, and it is high time I was dressing; so, with love to all, will say good-by.

"Your fond daughter,

"THEODORA.

"P. S. I despair of ever writing a rational letter. Everything here seems to be the surface, and I find it very easy floating. I forgot to say that the only drawback to the 'hop' was the fact that I had to dance the German with Mr. Simperton. How in the world he came to ask me is more than I know. I was dreadfully provoked, for Harry Dalton and Mr. Hasbroucke both asked me afterward. Important if true!

"T. H."

If Theodora herself was at a loss to account for Mr. Simperton's attentions to her at the hop, the cause was by no means unexplainable. She had grown to be a great favorite, and was constantly surrounded by a bevy of admirers. Her bright, fresh face, her entire absence from affectation, and a certain off-hand way she had of speaking, which, however, did not border on anything like bluntness, or rudeness, charmed almost everybody who met her.

The old beaux of society, who had been devoted in turn to each set of *débutantes* as they came out, and had found them all cut after very much the same pattern, were completely bewitched with her, and thoroughly enjoyed the novelty of talking to a young lady who never listened to

anything like flattery or familiarity, and yet was free from all affectation of prudishness or precision in her behavior or conversation. But perhaps the latter is a charge which can be laid at the doors of few young ladies of the present age, as they appear somewhat more inclined to affect certain masculine ways and "loud" conversation rather than an extreme reserve.

We have heard what Mr. Simperton's opinion of Theodora was, when she first made her appearance at Scranton; but that gentleman seemed to be pursuing a very different course in regard to her than the one upon which he at first resolved. For some little time after her arrival he took no more notice of her than common politeness required, simply bowing with his usual air of condescension when they met, but never entering into conversation. Theodora, on her part, appeared entirely indifferent to his neglect, in fact, altogether oblivious of his existence. However much Mr. Simperton might affect indifference to the opinions of the opposite sex, it was quite a new sensation he experienced when he found a young lady upon whom he had evidently failed to make the slightest favorable impression.

At first he thought it must be that Theodora only cared for the society of such young fellows as Harry Dalton, who had been her devoted esquire ever since their first meeting; but he soon found out his mistake, for she was as bright and entertaining to the men of his age and set as to her younger admirers. Jack Hasbroucke, who had shunned female society for several years, was constantly paying her every attention in his power, and several of Mr. Simperton's own particular friends, who affected the same style of manners and conversation as himself, might be seen hovering about her whenever occasion permitted. In fact, Mr. Simperton found it was getting to be quite "the thing" to know her, and immediately resolved to

change his programme, and honor her with a little of his society. But, to his great surprise, Miss Hartwell remained perfectly unmoved when he seated himself beside her one evening, and attempted to enter into conversation; in fact, if he could have thought such a thing possible, he would have thought she looked a trifle bored. He continued the conversation for some time, feeling confident that she must soon acknowledge his powers of fascination. He at first patronized her, as if she were a little girl who needed his encouragement; but finding that course without effect, tried another method. He looked at her from under his long eyelashes with tender glances, which had often caused many eyes to falter and droop before them; but she turned her own great eyes upon him with a perfectly unmoved expression in their clear gray depths. He lowered his voice to that soft cadence which had often called a blush to many a girlish cheek; but Theodora did not show the slightest signs of confusion. Mr. Simperton rarely brought out all his forces for a first sortie, using only his smaller guns of meaning glances and insinuating tones, as they seldom failed to bring the enemy to an unconditional surrender; but here was a citadel which seemed impervious to such small shot; so he immediately resorted to even bolder measures, and commenced flattering Theodora in the most pointed way. His first attempt in that direction was met by her with a look of amazement; his second called forth a witty repartee; at his third she rose, and, drawing herself up with a dignified air that would have been comic if it had not been so sincere, replied:—

“Really, Mr. Simperton, you must excuse me, but such remarks are not agreeable to me; besides, I advise you ‘not to waste your ammunition’ on ‘little girls with pug noses;’ I assure you they fail to appreciate it.”

Mr. Simperton looked not a little chagrined as Theo-

dora walked away and joined a group of friends the other side of the room, for in an instant the whole conversation of which the phrases she had quoted were a part occurred to him. He was more annoyed than he would have been willing to confess; still he consoled himself by thinking that Theodora's indifference to him was now entirely explained, as it was evidently the result of pique at his own former opinion of her. Not at all abashed by his first failure, he followed it up by several other like attempts; but found that flattery, tender glances, and lover-like tones were always received by her in such a manner as to make the person who tendered them appear ridiculous not only in his own eyes, but in those of whoever might either see or overhear him. In a very short time his endeavors to make an impression on her had become so marked that his repeated failures were made the subject of jest among his companions, who never lost an opportunity of tormenting him about them. This fact alone would have been sufficient to have induced him to follow up his attentions until he met with something like success; but he was now actuated by a much stronger motive. For the first time in his life the elegant Mr. Smythe Simperton found himself really in love, that is, as much in love as it would be possible for a man of his calibre ever to be with any one but himself. This feeling went so deep, however, that he threw aside much of his assumed languor, became deferential rather than patronizing in his manner, and by the time of the croquet-party, to which Theodora alluded in her letter to her mother, he had succeeded in making himself much more agreeable to her than at one time she would have thought possible.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CROQUET-PARTY.

"COME," said Mrs. Drayton, who was the centre of a group of ladies and gentlemen on the lawn at Rockhaven, "I think it is high time we began to play; we want to have three good games before tea."

"Yes, it is after five now," said Theodora. "I've a great deal at stake to-day, and I, for one, am eager for the fray."

"Why are you so particularly interested to-day, Miss Hartwell?" asked Jack Hasbroucke, who was intending to play with some others of the party on the opposite side of the lawn. "Are you going to play for a prize? If so I think I shall get one of your party to exchange with me."

"Oh, you can't do that, Mr. Hasbroucke," replied Theodora, as she stood balancing her mallet on the end of her finger; "it's against the rule. You must play with that side for the rest of the season; you know that was the agreement when we chose sides. There, I've done it; I've tried every day for a week to balance that mallet while I counted fifteen, and this is the first time I've succeeded. An elegant amusement, isn't it? I always had an admiration for those men in the circus who balance swords on their noses, and feathers on their foreheads. Please to remember, Mr. Hasbroucke, that a circus is the highest class of entertainment I've ever been to, that is, if I except the Dorcas meetings, and annual

church tea-parties, which of course are highly intellectual if not exciting; but they never afforded me the genuine pleasure I feel when I go to a first-class circus."

"You must live in a benighted part of the country, I should say," replied Mr. Hasbroucke, watching her with an amused smile as she still continued to balance her mallet.

"Oh, I do, I assure you," replied Theodora; "but I never fully realized the fact until I came here and found so many new specimens of the genus homo that I really wanted to pack up a few and send them to father as natural curiosities. But, Mr. Hasbroucke, your party is waiting for you, and here is Mr. Simperton coming for me, so good-bye for the present."

"Miss Hartwell," called Mr. Hasbroucke, as Theodora advanced to join Mr. Simperton, "you have not told me what the stake was you were so anxious to win."

"Oh," laughed Theodora, "you must ask Mr. Simperton about that."

"Yes," said Mr. Simperton, as he came up to them, "I am the only one who is to either lose or win, any way you can fix it. If my side wins, Miss Hartwell has promised to take a moonlight row with me."

"And if you win, Miss Hartwell?"

"Oh, then I shall escape the possibility of going to the bottom of the river," laughed Theodora, with a mischievous glance at Mr. Simperton. "You may be sure I shall do my best to win, for I have never seen him take an oar in his hand, and I haven't the most perfect faith in his skill. Wish me success, Mr. Hasbroucke."

"I will, on one condition," said Mr. Hasbroucke; "and that is, if you will promise to take a moonlight ride with me provided *your* side is successful."

"I hardly think that's fair," said Mr. Simperton; "it's rather rough on me, you know."

"Not at all," said Mr. Hasbroucke, quickly, "not at all; it only gives you a stronger motive for doing your best, because, if Miss Hartwell doesn't go with you, she *does* with me. Come, say you agree, Simp."

"Of course, I've nothing to say, if Miss Hartwell is satisfied."

"I'm satisfied," answered Theodora, with a saucy shrug of her shoulders. "I don't see but I'm bound for a moonlight expedition with one or the other, it doesn't matter much which."

"Your indifference is not very flattering," laughed Mr. Hasbroucke, as he turned to join his party, already assembled on the other side of the lawn; "but, nevertheless, I hope with all my heart that your side will win."

"Theodora, are you ever coming?" called Mrs. Drayton. "I thought you were in a hurry to begin; we have taken our turns."

"Oh, are you waiting for me? Ten thousand pardons! But what a glorious chance for croquet, only Mr. Simperton comes after me, and will just upset everything I do."

"I'm through the third wicket, Miss Theodora," said Harry Dalton, who was playing with her and Mrs. Drayton, against Mr. Simperton, Miss Brown, and Mr. Lee. "I just missed the fourth wicket by a hair's breadth, and down came Miss Brown and sent me flying; do come this way and help a fellow."

"That I will," said Theodora. "I'll do all I can for you, but you will have to look out for Mr. Simperton."

"You'll probably send him back into position and put him through two or three wickets before I get down there," said Smythe Simperton; "I'm slow, you know."

"And sure," replied Theodora.

Theodora was right. Smythe Simperton played croquet, as he did everything else, in the slowest possible

manner; but he calculated every stroke with the greatest nicety, almost invariably coming out ahead of those who at the beginning of the game made more brilliant plays. Theodora, on the contrary, played with a certain dash and daring, which at times took everything by storm, croqueting at long distances with almost marvelous precision, and going through two wickets at once as easily as one.

On this afternoon of which I am writing, Mr. Simperton seemed unusually deliberate, and Theodora played even more boldly than ever before; twice had she croqueted his ball across the lawn, watching him with infinite satisfaction and amusement as he languidly sauntered after it.

Notwithstanding the fact that the game was arranged in sides, all the interest, regarding the result, seemed to centre in Theodora and Mr. Simperton, as the agreement between the latter and Mr. Hasbroucke had been made within the hearing of all the players, and Theodora's indifference in contrast with the eagerness of the two gentlemen had caused great amusement.

"Miss Hartwell is in a very embarrassing predicament, isn't she?" laughed Miss Brown. "If she does her best to beat Mr. Simperton's side,—that's mine,—she will be showing a preference for Mr. Hasbroucke; and that, of course, she would not wish to do; so I shall do my best to prevent it;" and with a sharp blow she sent Theodora's ball out of position.

"That is the first time I've been croqueted to-day," said Theodora. "Mr. Dalton, you come next; think of my fate and do your best."

A groan from Theodora and Mrs. Drayton, and a shout of triumph from the opposite party, greeted Harry's ears as his ball shot past instead of through the wicket, right into the enemy's quarters.

"Now, Mr. Lee," cried Miss Brown, in the greatest state of excitement, "hit Mr. Simperton's ball, and send it just the other side of the stake, where he can lie in waiting for Miss Hartwell, as she comes up through those last two wickets."

"Easier said than done," replied Mr. Lee. "I know I can't put him the other side without hitting him out; however, I'll try."

"By Jove, you've done it!" cried Harry Dalton; "but you've put yourself out. Now we are all through the wickets except Miss Hartwell; no fear of her though. Be steady, Miss Hartwell, it's your last chance."

But Theodora did *not* play steadily. She gave a sudden blow with the edge of her mallet; her ball flew off on a tangent, and amid groans from one side and triumphant shouts of laughter from the other, Mr. Simperton, with the quietest little strokes imaginable, croqueted Miss Brown's ball against the stake and followed it up with his own. Turning to Theodora the instant his ball hit the stake, and raising his hat with infinite grace, he said, "Miss Hartwell, the gods have smiled upon me and crowned my efforts with success; but she whose smile alone could make my victory a triumph remains as unmoved as a statue."

"*I'm* thinking how cold the water will be if you upset me," replied Theodora. "I acknowledge you can manage a mallet; but I've my doubts about an oar."

"Who was successful?" cried Jack Hasbroucke, as he came running across the lawn,— "not you, Simp?"

"Yes, I and my side," replied Mr. Simperton, with a triumphant air. "But, my dear fellow, it was no more than you could expect, you know."

"He had no reason to expect it," said Theodora, who did not at all relish the perfect assurance of Mr. Simperton's tone; "he knows that generally we are pretty evenly

matched. But then, it's always the way; if ever I am particularly anxious to do anything well, I'm sure to fail."

"Thanks, Miss Hartwell," replied Mr. Hasbroucke, who was very much amused at Mr. Simperton's endeavors to conceal his chagrin, although knowing all the while that Theodora by no means intended *he* should flatter himself that she wished to win for his sake; "thanks! I am glad to see you considered you had an extra inducement for playing well to-day."

"Oh, I was just about to remark," replied Theodora, nonchalantly, "that this was the first time I had ever played when I might have considered *myself* as defeated even if my side had won."

"You see, Jack, you can't flatter yourself either," remarked Mr. Simperton, with a laugh, as he took Theodora's mallet and ball, proceeding with the others to the house. "But you'll admit that you were fairly beaten, won't you, Miss Hartwell?"

"Oh, yes, I'll acknowledge *that*," replied Theodora, smiling in a very bewitching way; "as fairly beaten as I ever was in my life."

"And when shall I have the pleasure of the moonlight row?"

"Any time you say. I suppose it must be this week."

"Then suppose we set to-morrow night."

"Very well," replied Theodora, nodding her head, as she entered the house, leaving them to deposit the balls and mallet on the piazza.

"I tell you I'm bound to have my ride yet," said Jack Hasbroucke to Smythe; "you have always had smooth sailing heretofore, but this is a case where you'll find breakers ahead."

"I'm not afraid," said Mr. Simperton, in a tone of

perfect assurance, "I'm sure of my moonlight ride, and after that you other fellows will have a very poor show."

"*Nous verrons*," laughed Mr. Hasbroucke, as the two entered the house; "don't forget the old proverb about counting chickens."

CHAPTER IX.

ZENOBIA.

"WHAT perfect humbugs we all are!" exclaimed Mrs. Drayton; "here we are keeping as quiet as mice, and I don't believe that one of us has turned a page for at least half an hour."

It was the morning following the croquet-party at Rockhaven, and almost all who had been there had by common consent taken their books or work down to the ledge to spend the morning.

"I believe you are right, Mrs. Drayton," said Smythe Simperton; "for I'm not sure but what I've been guilty of taking a little nap here behind the shelter of Miss Temple's sun-umbrella."

"If that's the case, Miss Temple will change her position," laughed Kate. "I've been making a martyr of myself, thinking that I was helping you to improve your mind; but I certainly shall not encourage such laziness. Mrs. Drayton, don't you think it is almost too warm to read?"

"Indeed I do; I myself have been watching that gentleman on horseback, on the brow of the cliff. How clearly his figure is defined against the sky!"

"Yes, and what a handsome figure it is too!" said Kate Temple. "Theodora and I have seen him ever so many times; he is a veritable, 'solitary horseman winding up a hill,' and is always seen 'in the dim distance.' We have never been able to get a view of his face, for

his back is invariably turned towards us. We call him G. P. R. James."

"A very appropriate name, under the circumstances," remarked Thurston Lee. "I can't tell you who he is; but I have met him frequently about here. He either lives, or is spending the summer, at Wrenworth, and rides over to this beach every day; he is always alone, and I have never seen him speak to a person. Without being a strictly handsome man he would be noticeable anywhere, and altogether makes a very striking picture on his coal-black horse."

"Decidedly an interesting character," said Mrs. Drayton. "I only wish he would come where we might get a little better view of him, for I find him vastly more entertaining than my book this morning."

"There is one person, however, who seems completely absorbed in hers," said Mr. Hudson, quietly pointing with his cane to Theodora, who sat a little apart and above the rest, and so intent upon the contents of the volume she held in her hand as to be entirely oblivious to everything going on around her.

"I wonder what she is reading," said Mr. Lee; "it is evidently something very interesting. Miss Temple, is she fond of the sensational school?"

"Indeed she is not," replied Kate. "I rather think she is reading Zenobia."

"Zenobia!" cried Smythe Simperton, so loudly that Theodora started and looked up in amazement.

"Who is talking about Zenobia?" she asked. "Wasn't she grand? Wasn't she glorious?"

"I guess you were right, Miss Temple," remarked Thurston Lee, with a smile.

"What, were you talking about me?" asked Theodora.

"Yes," said Mrs. Drayton; "we have been watching

you for some minutes. Mr. Hudson called our attention to you, because you were so wrapt up in your book."

"Don't you know what I'm reading? It is Zenobia."

"You say it as if the name alone was sufficient explanation of your intense interest in it," said Mr. Simperton.

"Why, it is," answered Theodora; "don't you think so?"

"Oh, I don't know anything about it any way," replied Mr. Simperton. "I've never read it, you know."

"Never read Zenobia!" exclaimed Theodora; "never read Zenobia! Oh, how much you have lost! But *you* have, Mr. Hudson, I am sure."

"Yes, I have read it, Miss Theodora," replied Mr. Hudson, as he looked at her with an amused smile as she appealed to him; "but it was a great many years ago."

"Of course, of course," replied Theodora; "and then I dare say you didn't feel about it as I do. I have read it two or three times already; but there are some parts that interest me as much as they did the first time I read it."

"What sort of a creature was Zenobia?" drawled Smythe Simperton.

"Creature!" exclaimed Theodora, looking down upon Mr. Simperton indignantly, as he lay stretched at full length a little below her; "creature! But then you don't know anything about her, so perhaps you're not to blame for the expression."

"No, I don't know anything about her, that is a fact," replied Smythe, shading his eyes with his hat as he looked with lazy admiration at Theodora, who was unconsciously making a lovely picture of youthful enthusiasm. "I remember seeing Miss Hosmer's statue sev-

eral years ago, and the only recollection I have of it is that Zenobia must have been a very uncomfortable sort of woman to have in the house; woman's rights, and all that sort of thing, you know."

Theodora said nothing, but cast a withering look upon Mr. Simperton and resumed her book with an air of offended dignity.

"Oh, I won't make any comparisons if you don't like it," replied Mr. Simperton. "I agree with Shakespeare, 'Comparisons are odious.'"

"*Odorous*," Mr. Simperton, if you please," said Theodora, shortly.

"*Odorous*, is it? I think I prefer *odious*. I've no doubt I could improve upon Shakespeare. But we won't digress; I really don't know when I've been so much interested in any historical character as I find I am in your friend Zenobia. She is historical, isn't she?"

"You're making fun of me, Mr. Simperton, or trying to," said Theodora; "but you shan't succeed. I won't say another word about Zenobia this morning."

"'Pon my honor, I'm not!" exclaimed Mr. Simperton, jumping up and leaning against the rock on which Theodora was sitting. "I wouldn't do such a thing, you know, 'pon my honor I wouldn't. Truly, I haven't half an idea who Zenobia was."

"Now, Mr. Simperton, you can't make me believe that," replied Theodora. "*Every one* knows that Zenobia was Queen of Palmyra."

"There! didn't I tell you she was woman's rights?" cried Smythe Simperton, triumphantly.

"Mr. Simperton, don't be absurd," laughed Mrs. Drayton, who with the others had been too much amused at the conversation to take any part in it before. "I had almost as great an admiration for Zenobia as Miss

Hartwell has, when I first read the book; and that is not many years ago."

"Miss Theodora, why do you admire her so much?" asked Mr. Hudson, who loved to draw Theodora out and hear her bright naïve remarks on any subject in which she was more than ordinarily interested. "What particular element in her character do you mostly admire?"

"I like her entire, just as she was, faults and all," replied Theodora, enthusiastically, turning to Mr. Hudson and speaking as if to him alone; "for of course she had faults, like all human beings. Think how well she governed her people, and how they adored her; how proudly she upheld the honor of Palmyra; how ambitious she was that it should be equal to, even greater than, any other kingdom in the world; how gloriously she led her armies to battle, going herself into the thickest of the fight, and encouraging her soldiers by her presence and the sight of her indomitable courage!"

"I acknowledge all that, Miss Theodora," said Mr. Hudson; "but are those the qualities you prefer in a woman? I should have said you were not one who gloried in seeing her sex made the subject of general comment and observation. You surely do not admire those women most who voluntarily assume positions which should only be occupied by a man."

"Oh, yes, she does," put in Smythe Simperton; "she believes in female suffrage, and all that sort of nonsense. I think she expects to be nominated for the presidency."

"Mr. Simperton, you provoke me beyond endurance. Mr. Hudson, do you think it follows at all that, because I admire Zenobia, and think she knew how to govern her people, I must necessarily want to have a woman president?"

"Not at all," replied Mr. Hudson, with a quizzical

twinkle in the corner of his eye; "there never was but one Zenobia, and *she* was a conquered queen."

"That was nothing against her as a woman or a queen," exclaimed Theodora, jealous for the honor of her heroine. "No one doubts the greatness of Napoleon, although he *was* conquered at Waterloo. The grandest thing in Zenobia's whole life was the way in which she bore her defeat, — that *was* heroism. Oh, how I do admire a truly heroic woman!" she exclaimed, throwing out her hands in that impetuous, unconscious way that made her so charming to older people. "One often sees men who are real heroes, — think how many there were in the war, — but we women have such a poor show. Just look at the life we lead here, — just have a delightful, lazy, good time every day. Of course, I enjoy it as much as any one; but when I read of such women as Zenobia, my blood stirs, and I wish I lived in a time when I, too, might do something glorious and grand, something that would make me truly heroic; not for the fuss and talk people would make about it, but for the glory of the thing itself. I wish I could have been a nurse in the army, in a hospital tent, where I ran the risk of being shot every other minute. But, pshaw! what nonsense I am talking! I shall go back and shut myself up there on the farm, and I don't think I shall have much opportunity to make myself a heroine."

"I am not so sure of that," said Mr. Hudson, going up to Theodora, and laying his hand gently on hers. "It is not always those lives about whose glorious deeds the most is known and said that are the most truly heroic. Go back to your quiet home; but carry with you that wish to do something heroic, 'for the glory of the thing itself,' and you will surely find, as every one finds who looks at life as something given us for a higher

purpose than mere enjoyment, that there is in the most quiet life in the world something to do, something to bear. *Do* whatever your hands find to do, with all your might; *bear* whatever trial, great or small, that may come to you, with Christ-like patience; and who shall say you may not be a heroine?"

Theodora never took her eyes from Mr. Hudson's face while he spoke to her. She sat forgetful of every one around her, for his earnest words touched the deepest chords of her nature. The others silently watched the two; all felt the force of Mr. Hudson's manner, and no one, not even Mr. Simperton, cared to break the spell. It was a strange time and place for such thoughtful words, but no one seemed to think them superfluous. Mr. Simperton moved forward, not to speak, but to get a nearer view of Theodora's upturned face. The slight noise he made in doing so startled her. Her eyes were filled with tears; she was in one of those moods when a serious word spoken to or by herself would have completely overcome her, and she was not one who voluntarily gave way to any deep emotion before others. With a sudden movement, and a gesture that was half comic, half pathetic, she sprang to her feet, exclaiming, "It's no use, Mr. Hudson. Who ever heard of a heroine only five feet two, with a pug nose?"

Every one laughed, and roused themselves from the grave silence into which Mr Hudson's words had thrown them; but he knew that, for all Theodora's apparently thoughtless speech, his words had made a deep impression on her, and in the hearts of many then present their echoes reverberated long, long afterwards.

CHAPTER X.

THE MOONLIGHT ROW.

"HERE comes Mr. Simperton, Theodora," said Kate Temple, looking in at the parlor-window where Theodora sat writing a letter to her mother. "He is gotten up regardless of expense. If he doesn't make a lasting impression to-night, he never will."

"Do entertain him a minute, that's a dear," said Theodora, in an undertone; "I must get this done to go in the first mail to-morrow morning."

"That's the way I always get served," said Kate, affecting an air of injured innocence. "I may entertain your cavaliers while they await your Highness' pleasure. However, Mr. Hasbroucke is coming from the opposite direction, so I shall be able to survive."

"Do run away and let me finish this in peace," laughingly replied Theodora. "Don't let them know I'm here, and I'll be out in a minute."

Theodora was as good as her word, for, quickly adding a closing sentence to the letter, she sealed it, and laying it on the hall table ready for the servant to carry it to the post, she caught up her shawl and hurried out on to the piazza.

"I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting," she exclaimed, as Mr. Simperton came towards her; "but I really could not help it. Good-evening, Mr. Hasbroucke."

"Don't mention it, Miss Hartwell, I beg of you," said Mr. Simperton, taking Theodora's shawl from her;

"we gentlemen always expect to be kept waiting by you fair ladies."

Theodora made no reply to Mr. Simperton's remark, except by a very expressive movement of the eyebrows, and turning to Mr. Hasbroucke, asked, "Shall I find you here when I get back?"

"That depends a good deal upon how long you are gone," laughingly replied Mr. Hasbroucke.

"And that is a difficult question to answer; indeed, whether I ever come back at all seems rather doubtful."

"Miss Hartwell does not appear to have the most perfect confidence in me," said Mr. Simperton, as they turned to go down the steps.

"Oh, perfect confidence in *you*, Mr. Simperton, but *not* in your muscle. However, I really don't believe anything very serious will happen, because, if you get completely exhausted, I can take an oar myself."

"At least, Miss Hartwell," said Mr. Simperton, joining good-naturedly in the laugh against him, "you're not afraid to trust yourself behind my grays, even when I have them in hand."

"Indeed I am not," replied Theodora, as, with Mr. Simperton's assistance, she mounted into his dog-cart, which stood waiting for them. Gathering up the reins, Mr. Simperton touched up the leader, and the horses started off at a round pace, leaving the much-suffering groom to scramble up behind as well as he could, regardless of life or limb.

It was a perfect night; the moon was just rising, and cast its long shafts of quivering silver across the water as Theodora and Mr. Simperton put off from the shore. Mr. Simperton placed Theodora in the stern of the boat, and set himself to work at the oars with secret misgivings as to what success his efforts in that direction would meet with. When a boy, he had made several attempts

at becoming an oarsman, but his constitutional laziness had prevented him from ever reaching anything like proficiency in the art. It was years since he had taken an oar in his hand, and how he had ever thought of doing so now was almost a mystery to himself. However, his usual confidence in his own ability did not entirely desert him now, and the beauty of the night, the perfect calmness of the water, and Theodora's own evident desire to look at everything about her rather than at him, were all facts very much in his favor. He managed, by keeping up a steady flow of comments upon various objects at a distance, to keep her attention diverted from his own awkwardness, until at last he became accustomed to the movement and succeeded in pulling along quite nicely, although how he was ever to round the point at the mouth of the river, for which they were headed, was a difficult problem for him to solve. Suddenly he bethought himself that it would be a good idea to have Theodora take the responsibility of steering, and then, if anything did go wrong, if they run into the shore two or three times, as he firmly believed they would, he could, in that very gentlemanly, exceedingly irritating way young gentlemen of the present day have of doing such things, give her to fully understand that it was her fault, while at the same time he affected to take the blame upon himself. Acting in accordance with this brilliant idea, he said, "Miss Hartwell, suppose you steer the boat; it's quite interesting, you know, and I saw you do it the other day at Silver Spring beautifully."

"Oh, I should like nothing better," replied Theodora; "only you must tell me just when to pull the ropes, and which one to pull, for this point is considered quite hard to round. You know there is quite a little reef here; you have to keep well off the shore."

Mr. Simperton did not know anything about the reef;

but he thought it best not to confess his ignorance, and only remarked, "Suppose you steer her off a little; we shall get clear of the rocks then."

"Pull well with your right oar, Mr. Simperton," cried Theodora, suddenly; "there's a rock at the left!"

Mr. Simperton started at Theodora's excited tone, and pulled so violently that he whirled the boat half round, and in his confusion took such a dip that, in vulgar parlance, he "caught a crab," and was thrown backwards, with his heels sticking up in the air in anything but a graceful position. Theodora could not possibly have refrained from laughing, if at that instant the boat had not suddenly whirled back again and struck upon the reef.

"We're on the rocks!" she cried, keeping her seat only by holding on firmly with both hands as the boat rocked violently from side to side. "Pull, Mr. Simperton, pull as hard as you can, or we shall be over!"

But Mr. Simperton was so bewildered that he did not know what he was about. He made a few frantic pulls at the oars, but they only had the effect of rocking the boat harder than ever. The situation was really dangerous. At the risk of losing her balance and being precipitated into the water, Theodora sprang past Mr. Simperton into the seat behind him, snatched the oars from his hands, and, concentrating her strength into one mighty effort, with a long, even pull brought the boat safely off.

Mr. Simperton was by no means a coward, when danger assailed him under circumstances when he might be said to feel himself somewhat at home. Had he been placed in an equally perilous situation behind a pair of horses, he would not have lost a particle of his accustomed coolness, and might possibly have exhibited much more than ordinary presence of mind and courage; but in a

boat he was entirely out of his element, and it must be confessed that for a moment he was thoroughly frightened. The fact that he could not swim a stroke had not probably tended to make pleasant the emotions with which he viewed the prospect of an upset. He sat in the place Theodora had occupied, the picture of chagrin; but as the boat floated off into calm water his usual self-assurance returned, and he said, "Why, really, Miss Hartwell, I don't know what I could have been thinking of to let you pull that right-hand rope; it steered us right on to the rocks, you know."

"For fear I might make just such another mistake," replied Theodora, dryly, as she rested on her oars after her really great exertion, "you can keep your present position in the stern, and *I'll* do the rowing."

"Indeed, Miss Hartwell, I couldn't think of such a thing," remonstrated Mr. Simperton; "the idea of your rowing me, — it is absurd; besides, it will be too great a tax upon your strength."

"I very much prefer taxing my strength a little, to trying a sea-bath this evening," replied Theodora; "however, I think we will keep in the open bay, as I don't care to attempt rounding that point again this evening."

"It's very pleasant here, don't you think so?" asked Mr. Simperton, wishing to change the subject, and feeling decidedly uncomfortable and out of place.

"Oh, yes, very pleasant indeed," replied Theodora, seeing his mortification and really pitying him, while at the same time she rather enjoyed the situation; "suppose we float with the tide a little way. I shan't mind pulling back."

Mr. Simperton thought it would be delightful to float with the tide; indeed, if Theodora had proposed floating on out to sea, he would not have made the slightest ob-

jection. He could not remember when he had ever been in such an awkward position. It was by no means the first time that he had sat at his ease in the stern of a boat, while a young lady rowed him about; but it *was* the first time he had ever invited a lady to take a moonlight row, and distinguished himself by sprawling flat on his back in the bottom of his boat, — a position which even his usual grace failed to render elegant, — nearly upset himself and companion, and closed the performance by having the oars taken away from him. He actually dreaded to return home, for he knew well what would be in store for him if Jack Hasbroucke should hear of the affair, and he felt that Theodora could not be blamed if she pictured the whole thing in glowing colors.

He had had, when they started, an undefined feeling that it would be a very appropriate time and place to say the few words which he had been for some time almost certain were all that was needed to make Theodora his for life; but the present order of things did not seem favorable for a proposal. He had thought that, when they got up the river, he would stop pulling, and, after resting gracefully on his oars for a moment or two, would change his seat for one near Theodora, and as they floated along in the shadow of the overhanging trees, tell the story of his love. It certainly would have been a very appropriate, as well as romantic, way of conducting matters, in fact, quite according to all the prescribed rules; but the fates were against Mr. Simperton. He certainly could not deliberately ask Theodora to cease rowing, in order that he might make love to her. He had about given it up, for the present, at least, when Theodora's proposition, that they should let the boat float, gave him the opportunity he desired. True, the situation was not exactly according to his mind; but he remembered that Theodora was to take her moonlight ride with Mr. Has-

broucke the following night, and he did not now feel so sure of his ground as to wish to give his friend an opportunity of getting ahead of him; so, resolving to make the best of circumstances, he began: —

“Miss Hartwell, I am so much heavier than you are that the boat doesn’t trim well while I sit here; so I am going to take that seat directly in front of you.”

“Oh, I think it does very nicely,” replied Theodora; “besides, I shall begin rowing again directly, and then you will have to steer.”

“There is no need to steer out here in the open bay,” he replied, as he changed his seat; “and we don’t want to go back yet; it is so nice floating in the moonlight, you know.”

“Very delightful, indeed,” laughed Theodora; “but floating won’t get us home again.”

“But *I’m* in no hurry to get home,” said Mr. Simperton, with a more tender inflection of voice than he had dared to assume to Theodora since he had learned by experience that she did not encourage such meaning tones. “I could float on forever.”

Theodora gave him a quick, scrutinizing glance, then answered with a laugh, “Indeed, Mr. Simperton, that wouldn’t suit me at all. I am altogether too matter-of-fact for such a romantic existence. I should catch a cold in my head, to say nothing of dying of hunger; besides, we couldn’t float on forever without running into something or other, and I am not sure we should always come off as well as we did before.”

“Of course I was only speaking metaphorically,” said Mr. Simperton, beginning to think that Theodora, as well as circumstances, was against him; “I meant to imply that for me there could be no greater pleasure in this world than to pass my life —”

“Why, how far out we are!” exclaimed Theodora,

cutting short Mr. Simperton's speech, as she realized for the first time that his words had more meaning in them than they had ever had before. "I must pull back as fast as ever I can;" and she grasped the oars and commenced rowing vigorously.

"Don't row yet," remonstrated Mr. Simperton, laying his hand on one of the oars; "I want to say something to you."

"Well, *say* it," replied Theodora, pulling away with all her might; so that the words sounded as if they were being jerked out of her; "I — can *hear* you, but I can't *talk* — myself."

"But I can't say it, Miss Hartwell, while you are rowing so hard," replied Mr. Simperton, attempting to take hold of her hand; "do stop."

"I can't," answered Theodora, desperately. "We are — *ever* so far out; it's — *very* damp. Won't it *keep*?"

"I am afraid it will have to," said Mr. Simperton, in a tone in which impatience and chagrin were strangely mingled; but at the same time secretly congratulating himself that Theodora probably had not the slightest idea of what his intentions had been, or she would not have behaved in such an exceedingly indifferent manner.

Theodora pulled on in silence, Mr. Simperton making no more attempts to interrupt her; indeed, he hardly spoke at all until they reached the landing, where, to his no small mortification, he beheld Mr. Hasbroucke standing to receive them.

"How is this, Simp.?" cried Mr. Hasbroucke, the moment they were within speaking distance; "do you invite a young lady to go rowing with you, and then let her do all the work?"

"Oh, it was my own idea," answered Theodora, quickly, giving Mr. Simperton an expressive glance, which assured him she would tell no tales; "you know

I admire to row, and I took the oars away from Mr. Simperton, in spite of his remonstrances."

"Then you *didn't* get upset?" laughingly inquired Mr. Hasbroucke. "I confess my anxiety led me down here to assure myself that you were safe."

"Miss Hartwell may be very much obliged to you for your interest in her safety," remarked Mr. Simperton, somewhat stiffly; "but as far as I am concerned I must confess I think your fears were groundless."

"Oh, not at all," broke in Theodora, who, although she determined never to mortify Mr. Simperton by relating to any of his friends what had taken place, could not resist tantalizing him a little; "for my part I am ever so much obliged to Mr. Hasbroucke for taking so much trouble on my account; and something *might* have happened, — we might have struck on the rocks and upset."

"Of course, you might have," responded Mr. Hasbroucke, infinitely amused at Mr. Simperton's manner, and having his own private opinion as to the cause of his evident embarrassment, which, however, was far from being the right one. "But, to be honest, Miss Temple sent me down here to say that she had gone with quite a large party over to the Ocean House to an impromptu hop, and for you to come right there; my dog-cart is here, and I'll drive you both over."

"I will go, of course," replied Theodora, "although I am in anything but a suitable dress."

"You drive, Simp.," said Mr. Hasbroucke, as he assisted Theodora into the dog-cart, "and I'll jump up behind."

"Thank you, no," replied Mr. Simperton, "if Miss Hartwell will excuse me, I think I'll not go."

"Not go, Mr. Simperton?" said Theodora, who really would have been glad to make amends for the annoyance she had caused him. "Oh, you had better;

these impromptu hops are ever so much nicer than the regular receptions."

But Mr. Simperton still declined, and bade them good-evening, not thinking it necessary to reply to Mr. Hasbroucke's parting remark, "Well, Simp., we will let you off; for I know, after the unusual exertion of pulling a boat for over two hours, you can't feel quite up to the German."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

"COME, Theodora, you might as well confess it," said Kate Temple, as the two girls lay on the bed the afternoon after the hop at the Ocean House, resting for a German which was to take place that evening at Rockhaven. "I am sure he brought matters to an interesting conclusion."

"That depends upon what you call an 'interesting conclusion,'" replied Theodora. "I thought, when we were on the rocks, the conclusion bid fair to be decidedly moist."

"Oh, I don't mean that at all," said Kate; "but the persistent way in which you dodge the question shows me at once that there is more cause for my suspicions than I really thought. I am confident, now, that he not only proposed, but was accepted."

"Kate, you must have lost your senses," said Theodora.

"Ah, my dear, don't prevaricate any more; it's very unkind of you to keep it from me when I was the means of your making his acquaintance. Theodora Simperton, how strange it sounds!"

"Kate, you provoke me beyond endurance," exclaimed Theodora. "Why, do you really think that I would accept Smythe Simperton?"

"Then you've refused him; you've refused him, Dody. How could you be so cruel? Besides, think of the thousands you've lost."

"I haven't refused him,—there!" cried Theodora; "and, if I had, do you suppose I should tell of it? The man has never asked me to have him."

"Really?" and Kate's voice and face both showed that she had been thoroughly in earnest. "Well, I was never more mistaken in my life. I supposed it was all settled last night; although his non-appearance at the hop rather surprised me, but I supposed he was afraid of betraying himself before vulgar eyes."

"Kate, don't be absurd," replied Theodora, sitting up and throwing the great masses of curling hair away from her face, "you ought to be ashamed to talk so. Do be sensible and quiet a minute; I want to ask you something."

"I promise to be quiet; but I don't feel equal to the exertion of being sensible. What is it you want to know?"

Theodora turned her face full upon her cousin and asked abruptly, "Do you like Thurston Lee?"

The faintest possible tinge of red showed itself on Kate's cheeks at the question, but she answered, with unwavering eye and the coolest tone imaginable, "Like Thurston Lee? Oh, yes, I like him very much."

"Then why don't you behave as if you did?" asked Theodora, still looking down upon her cousin with a very earnest expression. "You needn't raise those black eyebrows of yours,—I mean just what I say. Why don't you behave as if you liked him?"

"Well, really, Theodora," quietly replied Kate, "I am not aware that I have ever given him any reason to suppose I *dislike* him. Why are you so much interested in him,—because you like him so much yourself?"

"Precisely," replied Theodora. "Although he has shown me less attention than any gentleman here, I like him better than all the others, partly because I think he is a thorough, perfect gentleman,—one who wouldn't do a rude or unkind thing for the world; and partly because

I see very plainly that he *more* than *likes* my Cousin Kate."

Again that faint tinge of red might be detected, by an acute observer, in Kate's cheeks; but she still answered with the same coolness, "What an exceedingly imaginative young woman you are, Dody! As Mr. Lee rarely ever comes near me, you must acknowledge he chooses a peculiar way to show his preference."

"And why doesn't he come near you, I should like to know?" exclaimed Theodora, with one of her impetuous gestures. "Why? Because you never allow him to. If he asks you to dance, you are — 'previously engaged;' if he asks you to go rowing with him, you 'have a slight cold, and fear the dampness;' if he walks on the beach with you, you immediately join some party so as to avoid a tête-à-tête. Of course, you do all this in an exceedingly polite way; but you do it nevertheless, and Mr. Lee is not the man to persist in attentions when he finds they are not agreeable; he has too much self-respect."

"Really, Theodora, I don't see as anything you have said goes to prove that Mr. Lee is very much enamoured of me. I have been asked to dance, row, and walk on the beach by a great many gentlemen; but I never considered it a proof that they were in love with me."

"Kate, you shan't misunderstand me," said Theodora; "I believe you have greater reason than I to think Mr. Lee likes you; and how you can help liking him is more than I can understand. Why, his little finger is worth more than Frank Dale's whole body; and yet for the last two weeks you have encouraged *him* in every way."

Kate made no answer, but at the mention of Mr. Dale's name her face assumed a hard, resolute expression, so foreign to its usual character that Theodora looked at her a moment in silence, and then exclaimed, in a voice of

surprise, almost of horror, "Kate! Kate! it can't be that you mean to accept Frank Dale?"

"And why not?" asked Kate, in a low voice, but not raising her eyes to Theodora's face; "he is a millionaire, has a house in the city, a superb place at Newport, horses without number, and an undisputed position in society."

"Yes, and what else has he?" asked Theodora. "Kate, you know as well as I do, far better, that he has not brains enough to last him over night; that he is the fastest, most dissipated man, in the fastest, most dissipated set in Boston."

"It does not necessarily follow that his wife need be fast, that I know of," replied Kate, in the same quiet, determined tone. "Mr. Dale belongs to one of our oldest and wealthiest families; as his wife, I should have everything in this world that heart could wish for, and hold as high a position in society as any woman can hold in our democratic America."

"Yes, and have a drunkard for a husband."

"Theodora, I think you put it rather strongly," said Kate, still in the same measured tones; "neither you nor I have ever seen Mr. Dale intoxicated."

"Perhaps not; but nevertheless you and I both know that intemperance is one of the least of his vices. O Kate, Kate! I cannot believe it; I will not believe that, for such a man as Frank Dale, you will give up such a one as Thurston Lee."

"My dear, you seem to forget two very important facts: first, that Mr. Lee has never sued, and is not likely ever to sue for my fair hand; second, that he is comparatively poor."

"I never would have believed that you could be so mercenary," said Theodora, speaking with intense earnestness. "Comparatively speaking, he may be poor, so

far as money is concerned; but he has riches of which Frank Dale can never boast. As Mrs. Dale, you *may* have a high social position (although, in point of family, no one can take exception to Mr. Lee); you *may* have more money than you can possibly spend; but how much faith will you have in your husband's honor and uprightness? Will you receive from him the same devoted love and watchful care that you know the wife of Thurston Lee will have?"

"Theodora, you are growing positively eloquent," replied Kate, as she turned her head away with an air of weariness; "but really you must excuse me; I think it's almost too warm to listen to any more of your pretty little discourses on matrimony, the vices and virtues of you various friends, and their comparative qualifications for husbands."

Theodora's eyes flashed, and she looked both hurt and angry, for she had spoken merely because she felt that she could not remain silent if there was the slightest possibility that a word from her would have any effect in changing what she feared was her cousin's determination, — to accept Mr. Dale, who had been so marked in his attentions to her as to leave no doubts as to what were his intentions.

Nothing has been said heretofore about this Mr. Dale, as he rarely appeared at the small parties or entertainments to which we have already alluded; for his character and habits were such as to make him an objectionable companion, notwithstanding his acknowledged claims to a position in society. Kate had known him for a long time, and it was rightly thought that for her sake he had come to Scranton, which of itself offered very few attractions to a man of his tastes.

Theodora had seen with amazement the open way in which Kate encouraged his attentions, and had wondered

many times why it was that her uncle did not put a stop to them. But Mr. Temple was really not aware how far matters had proceeded. He was one of those easy, good-natured sort of men, who let every one have their own way, simply because it would be too much trouble to interfere. Kate had always been in the habit of receiving attentions from men of fashion, and so long as they behaved themselves in his house, treated him respectfully, and belonged to a good family, he was perfectly satisfied.

It is only fair to state, however, that this was the first time she had ever accepted marked attentions from a man who was generally acknowledged to be unprincipled.

For some time there was silence between the two girls. Theodora was making a pretence of reading when Kate interrupted her, saying, "Attempting to read? Oh, don't! I can't go to sleep, so you must talk about something interesting, only don't give me another moral lecture."

"I don't think of anything particularly brilliant," replied Theodora; "we exhausted the 'hop' last night."

"Didn't Mrs. Stoughton look lovely?" asked Kate. "I think she is certainly one of the most fascinating little women I ever met in my life. She must be at least ten years older than I am, and she looks even younger; blondes always do wear well."

"When are she and Mr. Schleifdorf to be married?"

"Married!" exclaimed Kate, speaking for the first time with some energy; "why, she is married already."

"I know that," replied Theodora, "but what is to prevent her marrying again?"

"Well, you may be in your right mind," said Kate, raising herself on her elbow, "but I should say that Mr. Stoughton was a decided objection."

"Mr. Stoughton! Why, I didn't know there was such

a person ; I thought she was a widow. But why doesn't she live with her husband ? ”

“ They *do* live together, only he doesn't like Scranton, I believe ; or she likes it better without him, so he stays in the city. But what made you think she was a widow ? ”

“ Because Mr. Schliesdorf is so devoted to her ; of course he is some relation of the family. ”

“ Oh, no, not the slightest in the world, — *that's* been going on for over a year. ”

“ I think it's perfectly outrageous ! ” cried Theodora, in righteous indignation ; “ why, I never go anywhere that I don't see them together. If I go to ride I am sure to meet her riding with him ; if I walk on the beach, I always stumble into them seated among the rocks in the most lover-like manner. I never heard of such a thing ; I always thought she was very nice. ”

“ And so she is, ” replied Kate ; “ perhaps a trifle imprudent, but nothing more. ”

“ A trifle imprudent ! ” exclaimed Theodora, in tones of the deepest indignation. “ I don't believe any respectable married woman would allow any man to be so attentive to her as Mr. Schliesdorf is to Mrs. Stoughton. I shall never speak to her again, never ! ”

“ You unsophisticated creature ! ” laughed Kate, “ Why, my dear child, it is decidedly the fashion for young married ladies to have some gentleman who is perfectly devoted to them wherever they go. Sometimes it is a bachelor, and sometimes he's the husband of one of her own friends. I assure you it's very common. I went out of town in the steam-cars one day, and sat very near a gentleman who was playing the devoted to another man's wife, and I was very much entertained watching them. She behaved as if she were a little coquette of sixteen ; but despite the fascinating glances and very low,

even lover-like tones, I could easily see that each knew the other was getting up the appearance of a sentiment which neither of them really felt. Oh, yes, Theodora, if you were to spend one winter, even in proper, dignified Boston, and go about in fashionable society, you would find that such flirtations were considered quite 'the thing.' "

" 'The thing,' " exclaimed Theodora, in the most scornful tone imaginable; " I'm glad I'm not in fashionable society; if it has succeeded in making you look upon such disgraceful proceedings as a matter of course, it wouldn't suit me at all."

" Where are you going? " asked Kate, for Theodora was hurriedly putting on her romping dress; " the sun is hot enough to scorch you; you'll be black as an Indian to-night."

" I don't care if I am," replied Theodora, twitching on her hat with such energy that she snapped the elastic and had to stop and fasten it with a pin; " I don't care if I burn to a cinder. I'm decidedly roused, and I believe a long run on the beach in this fresh wind will do me good."

" But you're not going out with your hair down your back that way; you look like a little girl."

" I don't care what I look like. I want to get off where I can breathe freely; besides, there is no danger of my meeting any one at this hour of the afternoon, unless it is the 'solitary horseman.' "

" But you wouldn't care to meet him with your hair flying about that way. Honestly, Theodora, I wouldn't do it; it's dreadfully becoming, but it's not 'the thing' at all."

" Don't tell me what's 'the thing,' " exclaimed Theodora, turning back as she was about to leave the room. " I've learned by experience that *that* means to *do* what-

ever you secretly think isn't womanly or respectable, and *not* to do anything that's natural and harmless. I'm tired to death of the sound of the words, and now I am going to do as I please, and all Scranton may turn up their noses and be horrified if they choose."

Kate threw herself back on the pillow and laughed quietly as Theodora flew downstairs; but somehow the laugh turned into a sigh, as she said to herself, "Oh, well, she might as well think I approve of such things, for if I marry Frank Dale who knows what I may be driven to myself."

CHAPTER XII.

AN ADVENTURE.

OUT into the bright sunshine ran Theodora, looking, as Kate had said, like a little girl, in her romping suit, which consisted of a bright scarlet sailor-shirt and petticoat of the same color, with a gray over-dress. Her beautiful hair hung in great, waving, curling masses below her waist, surmounted by her sailor hat. But she was not thinking of her appearance; she was thoroughly excited and indignant, not so much by the mere fact that such intimacies as those to which Kate alluded were countenanced by society, but that her dear cousin, whom she loved with her whole heart, should look upon such behavior as something at which one shrugs the shoulders and takes as a matter of course.

She ran on, not stopping until she reached the beach; she did not meet any one on her way; if she gave a thought to the fact it was one of regret, for she was in a mood when nothing would have suited her better than to meet a party of her most fashionable acquaintances, and thoroughly shock them by her decidedly unconventional appearance.

"Yes," she said to herself, as she stood facing the sea, the wind blowing her hair about in every direction, "I remember what Mr. Lee said about my taking that run on the beach with Harry Dalton; *that* was 'making myself conspicuous;' but it was being conspicuous in a perfectly natural, harmless way, and I was entirely un-

conscious of it. It is very shocking for me, a girl of nineteen, to run on the beach; it's not 'the thing' for me to be here now with my hair down; people would raise their eyebrows and look politely surprised if they should see me, I suppose; but they wouldn't be at all shocked if they were to meet Mr. Schliesdorf making love to Mrs. Stoughton, and she a married woman with little children of her own! Oh, no, that's 'the thing.' I wonder what mother would say to that?"

Theodora seated herself on a solitary rock near by, and, resting her chin on her hand, gave herself up to a reverie, and there she remained, scarcely stirring for at least half an hour, her great eyes, that were usually full of fun and laughter, looking straight before her, with a strangely troubled expression in their gray depths; her lips, that almost always wore such a mirthful expression, tightly pressed together, while the little dimples that generally danced about their corners had hidden themselves quite out of sight. If one of her numerous admirers had seen her then, he would have wondered what had changed the bright, sunny-faced girl who had bewitched him by her fresh, piquante beauty, and frank, impetuous manner, into such a serious little woman. The thought of her mother had taken her back to the dear old farm and the happy country life she led there, — a life which, after she had been at Scranton a few weeks, had seemed, by force of contrast, decidedly insipid; but her recent conversation with Kate, combined with sundry secret little misgivings, which had been roused by the motherly warnings in her frequent letters from home, had led her to look upon her present existence in an entirely different light. She had enjoyed herself thoroughly, and felt there was much that she should enjoy so long as she remained at Scranton; but her eyes had been suddenly opened to many of the evils of society, and as yet she was

not able to separate the chaff from the wheat. For the moment, she was inclined to think that all the women she had met must be like Mrs. Stoughton, and all the men like Mr. Schliesdorf or Mr. Dale. She almost convinced herself that there could not be anything good in a society where so much evil was allowed to openly exist. She began to wonder if she were not falling into some of the "ways of the world" herself; if *she* had not encouraged the attentions of some men of whose moral characters she could not help entertaining decided and well-grounded doubts; in short, she was getting very morbid and misanthropical, when she suddenly exclaimed aloud: —

"Oh, dear, I shall sit here until I get bluer than indigo! My thoughts are all in a muddle. I'll have a good climb on the rocks, and then perhaps I shall feel better."

Beyond the place known as "the ledge" was a high cliff, which Theodora had always threatened to climb, for the simple reason that it was generally considered quite a dangerous, in fact, almost impossible, ascent for a woman to attempt to scale, and towards these rocks she now bent her steps, determined on going to their very summit. Fortunately she was a good climber, perfectly fearless, and free from all sense of dizziness even when at a great height; and as she was unimpeded by any superfluous skirts, she proceeded to mount, not without some difficulty, but still rapidly going higher and higher, feeling a fresh elation every time she stopped and looked about her.

The view grew grander at every step. The exercise and excitement of climbing had entirely cleared her mind of all unpleasant reflections. On and on she went, and did not stop for a final rest until she reached the highest point that afforded standing-room, when she leaned against a great rock which formed the very topmost peak of the

cliff, and felt, as every one feels after accomplishing a daring feat, excited and triumphant. As she stood resting after her exertions and wishing there was some one there to applaud her success, she heard somebody singing in a low, deep voice, as if to themselves. The sound seemed to come almost beneath her feet, and she looked about her in astonishment, wondering who the solitary singer could be. As she listened she became convinced that the person must be below her, on the side of the cliff facing the sea. She rested her hand on the rock in front of her, and leaning forward, at the risk of breaking her neck, discovered a man extended on the ground at full length, his back towards her, as he lay looking at the sea, singing to himself. Theodora thought that there was something in his figure that looked very familiar, and she stretched her neck farther yet, hoping to get a nearer view of his face, when the elastic of her hat, which she had only half pinned in her excitement, suddenly gave way; off went her hat, fluttered for a moment in the air, then, in a lull of the wind, swooped down and landed directly on the head of the unconscious singer, who sprang to his feet in amazement as it touched his forehead.

Theodora drew back, laughing so heartily that she was obliged to lean against the rock to support herself, which of course completely hid her from the gentleman below. As soon as she had recovered herself she again leaned forward. The gentleman now stood with her hat in his hand, looking about him in bewilderment. "It is the 'solitary horseman,' as I live!" exclaimed Theodora, under her breath,— "G. P. R. James himself. What an adventure!" Suddenly the stranger caught sight of her head, as it appeared over the rock, with her hair falling all about it, and her eyes dancing with fun and laughter.

He looked at her as if he thought she had flown from the skies, then called out, "Are you alone?"

"Yes," answered Theodora; "please keep my hat until I get down there."

"Stay where you are," the gentleman replied, in a tone of authority, at the same time springing from his cave-like retreat. "You are a crazy child to be up there; don't move until I come to you."

"What does the man take me for, I should like to know?" said Theodora, indignantly, as the gentleman disappeared round a great boulder. "A little girl, I really believe; well, he'll soon find out he's very much mistaken."

She turned to go down the cliff; but she found, to her no small chagrin, that it was much easier work ascending than descending. The rocks, as she looked down from them, seemed twice as high and steep as they really were, and she expected to fall every minute; but she persisted in making the attempt, until suddenly the stranger again appeared below, and called to her, "Don't move; you will break your neck. I shall be there in a moment to help you down."

"I can go down as I came up," replied Theodora, shortly, — "and that was alone."

"What an obstinate little girl you are!" cried the stranger, in a tone, half of amusement, half of vexation; "it's not a very easy thing for *me* to climb down this cliff. much less for you. Be quiet, I insist!"

But Theodora would not keep quiet; she hurried on, although she was really frightened, and clutched at the rocks so violently, as she sprang from one to the other, that she almost tore the flesh from her hands. Just as the stranger reached her she stepped on a rolling stone, and would certainly have fallen headlong if he had not caught her.

"Did you hurt yourself?" he asked, as she twitched her hand away from him.

"No, I did not," she answered, very ungraciously. "I'll thank you for my hat."

"It's lucky for you that it blew off," remarked the gentleman, as he handed it to her; "for if it had not, I should not have known you were here."

"I can get along very well without your assistance, sir," replied Theodora, as she attempted to pass him and continue her really dangerous course; but before she was aware of his intentions he had caught her in his arms and was springing with her down the cliff.

Resistance was worse than useless; indeed, she was so angry at the turn affairs had taken, and so extremely frightened, that she could not have spoken a word if she had so desired. As he sprang with her from one rock to another, across what now seemed yawning chasms, she fully expected they would both be dashed to pieces, and shut her eyes only to open them in a few moments, as he set her safely on her feet on the beach. But gratitude was the last emotion which overcame her, for her first words were, "Sir, you ought to be ashamed of yourself; never in my life did I—"

"Don't be silly, child," he interrupted her, with the utmost composure, all the more irritating as it was evidently not at all assumed; "but run home as fast as you can, and another time don't go out on those rocks without a responsible person to look after you."

Theodora gave him a withering look, and turned away with an air of intense dignity, but with decidedly sheepish feelings, for she was perfectly confident that he stood laughing at her all the time.

"He really did think I was a little girl," she exclaimed, as she hurried on. "So much for being short, and going

out with my hair down ; it just serves me right. I wonder if I shall ever learn wisdom by experience ! Won't Kate laugh at me, when I tell her that I actually did meet the 'solitary horseman,' and in such a plight !'

CHAPTER XIII.

SAD NEWS.

"WELL, Theodora, you certainly exceed any one I ever saw for having remarkable adventures," cried Kate, who had been convulsed with laughter over Theodora's account of her encounter with the "solitary horseman." "I only wish I had been there to see the whole thing from beginning to end."

"I wish you had," laughed Theodora; "for now that my anger has cooled off I can see how perfectly ludicrous the whole affair was. Of course he thought I was a little girl, about ten or twelve years old; my face is a baby's face any way, and with my short dress, and hair down my back, it was no wonder he made the mistake. How perfectly absurd my dignified airs must have seemed to him! I know I shall turn the color of a peony if I ever meet him again."

"But tell me what he is like," said Kate. "Is he handsome?"

"Positively I don't know," replied Theodora. "I know he is tall, and has a good figure, — we knew that before; but my chief impression was that of a man who generally had his own way. I know he has a light mustache, but whether he is thirty, forty, or fifty, I couldn't say, to save my life. I was so excited that I didn't stop to study his face, although I should know it among a thousand."

"Then you must be able to give me some idea of his looks," persisted Kate. "Has he a good nose?"

"Yes, I'm sure of that; it was not a pug certainly. But my idea of his face was not so much that it was handsome, but very firm and decided. I found him so, at any rate."

"I should say you did," replied Kate; "but we ought to be dressing ourselves; it's almost eight, and you know Mrs. Drayton expressly asked us not to be fashionable. What are you going to wear?"

"Oh, either my white muslin plain, or the over-dress with my blue silk. I never have to remain in doubt long; that's one comfort in having a small wardrobe."

"Why not wear the entire white dress over the blue silk to-night? That will be a little different, and I'll lend you my black velvets and marguerites. That will be lovely."

"Thank you ever so much," replied Theodora. "I'll wear them with pleasure. What shall you wear yourself?"

"I'm undecided between two extremes; either my black lace or my white."

"The white, by all means; you are too young to wear black to evening parties, particularly in summer. Wear the white, with a wreath of scarlet geraniums, and your dress looped up with them."

"Where am I to get such a wreath, I should like to know?" asked Kate, as she brushed out her long black hair.

"I mean natural ones, of course. I'll slip out the back way and pick them, and make you a wreath in a twinkling;" and Theodora threw on her wrapper and ran downstairs for the flowers.

An hour or two afterwards, as Theodora floated round the drawing-room at Rockhaven, her feet keeping time to the inspiring strains of a Strauss waltz, all such unpleasant reflections as disturbed her peace of mind that after-

noon seemed to have entirely disappeared. Indeed, to have seen her then no one would have thought that such a bright, joyous young creature ever could look at the world through anything but "rose-colored spectacles." She was in one of those moods when everything seemed to strike her as more delightful than ever before. The music never seemed so fascinating; motion seemed involuntary when accompanied by that swaying, surging melody, so peculiar to German waltzes. Every one seemed to her to be particularly gay and happy, and she gave herself up to the enjoyment of the hour, unconscious that over her head hung a cloud which was fast closing round her to shut out the brightest light that shone upon the pathway of her young life.

As she stood in the centre of the drawing-room between two gentlemen, laughingly assigning to each an absurd appellation for one of the figures in the German, her eyes suddenly turned towards the hall-door, where several of the older people stood looking in at the dancers. Behind them, with his hat in his hand, evidently having just entered the house, stood her uncle. As her eye met his, he beckoned her to him. Instantly every particle of color left her face, and, hastily asking the gentlemen to excuse her, she instantly left the room. Not looking at the wondering faces of those who made way for her to pass, she walked directly to her uncle, laid her hand on his arm, and before he could speak said, in a scarce audible whisper, "Mother!"

"Yes, dear, don't be frightened," taking her hands in his, for she was so terribly white he thought she was going to faint; "one of her old attacks. I have had a telegram; the doctor thinks that all danger is past, but your father thinks you had better go home."

"Yes, don't call Kate; there is no need. I shall not want any one." Then, turning to Dr. Drayton, who had

at that moment entered the hall from the card-room opposite, "Don't say anything about it, please, to your wife just now, — she is dancing; but tell her by and by that I have had bad news from home; my mother —"

There she stopped, put her hand to her throat quickly, then motioning to her uncle to tell the doctor, she ran upstairs for her wrappings. In an instant she was down again, and thanking the doctor by a warm pressure of the hand for his kind offers of assistance, left the house with her uncle so quietly that her departure was unnoticed except by the few who had seen her face as she so suddenly left the drawing-room, and they had thoughtfully refrained from intruding themselves upon her when they learned from Dr. Drayton the cause of her sudden disappearance.

"Now tell me everything," said Theodora, as the door closed after them; "have you kept anything from me?"

"Nothing, dear, nothing at all," replied her uncle, in a cheerful voice; "I wouldn't have frightened you by going for you if I had not felt sure you would want to leave in the early train, and you'll need all the sleep you can get. Don't spend the night packing; get together what you will absolutely need, and Mrs. Brown will send the rest after you. But what made you think it was your mother, dear; had she written you that she was not well? I fancied that this was something very sudden."

"It must have been," answered Theodora, her trembling voice betraying that her composure was only forced; "but still I know the moment I saw your face that you had bad news about her. It is ever so long since she has had one of these attacks, but the doctor said she was liable to have another any time, and I have always dreaded it. She has been remarkably well all summer, and I know this must have been unusually sudden and severe,

for she promised me faithfully that if anything were the matter she would have father write at once ; but she never would have allowed him to telegraph unless she thought she — ” Theodora’s voice failed her, and she sobbed uncontrollably.

“ Don’t, dear,” said her uncle, in his comforting way. “ I really think you are more alarmed than you need be. I know there is always something dreadful about a telegram ; but if your mother were at all ill, not to say dangerously so, she would naturally want you there to take care of her, and the sooner the better, and so of course your father telegraphed, as being the quickest and surest way of bringing you.”

“ But, O uncle, if I had not come here at all then I should have been with her now. What if I should be too late ? ”

“ But you won’t, Theodora. I feel sure you won’t. Now, dear, show that you have some of your mother’s fine qualities and don’t allow your imagination to conjure up unreal fears. Here we are at home. Mrs. Brown is up to help you with your packing ; but go to bed as soon as you can, and I will call you in good season. I am going with you.”

“ Thank you, uncle. you are so kind. and do me ever so much good,” replied Theodora, as she kissed him good-night. “ I will go to bed, and I’ll try to sleep, for I may need all my strength when I get home.”

“ That’s my own sensible niece,” said Mr. Temple, giving her a hearty kiss. “ Don’t get up until I call you, for you have a hard day’s journey before you.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CLOUD FALLS.

THEODORA found her mother much better than she had feared. The attack, which had been much more severe than any she had ever experienced, had left her so weak that she was still confined to her bed; but all apprehensions of an immediate return of the spasms, which resulted from an enlargement of the heart, were entirely allayed.

Theodora had been at home just a week, and had devoted every moment to her mother; but it had not been nursing which fatigued either body or mind. All that Mrs. Hartwell required was perfect rest and freedom from all care, and Theodora found her chief delight in reading to her or amusing her with accounts of her visit. She seemed to have gained a great deal of strength within the last two or three days, and intended to sit up for the first time that afternoon. Theodora had taken out her clothes and laid them ready for her, and was now sitting by the open window indulging in a reverie while she waited for her mother to awake, for she had been asleep for some time.

It was a bright day in the latter part of September, and as warm as many an August day, and as Theodora sat looking out on the bright landscape before her, her thoughts carried her back to Scranton. It was evidently a pleasant reverie in which she was indulging, for an amused expression played over her face and more than

once her lips parted in a decided smile. She was thinking of one and another of the amusing incidents that had occurred during the last two months; but notwithstanding that the recollection of them gave her so much pleasure, she never once wished herself back at Scranton. Theodora had the gift of adapting herself to circumstances; in short, wherever she was she fitted in and was satisfied, and, now that she once more found herself quietly settled at home, she assumed her usual household duties, and went about her accustomed work without a thought of regret that she could not always be as delightfully lazy and luxurious as she had been for two months. She was roused from her reverie by her mother's voice, and was instantly by her bedside.

"Why, mother, darling, what a nice long nap you have had! Don't you feel like getting up?" she asked.

"I feel rested, dear, but I don't think, after all, I'll get up to-day; I'm sorry you have taken my clothes out, but perhaps I shall feel more like it to-morrow."

"Never mind about the clothes," said Theodora, fondly stroking her mother's hair; "but I wish you could get some strength. Don't you want a glass of wine?"

"Thank you, dear, I think I will have a very little;" then, as she lay watching Theodora pour out the wine, "Where is Charity?"

"She has gone home; she was very sorry not to say good-by to you, but Joe had the horse harnessed to drive Sarah down to the village to do a little shopping, and I told her she had better ride with them. I knew you would prefer she should go than to walk. There, dear, does it strengthen you?" putting her arm around her mother and supporting her while she sipped a few swallows of wine.

"Yes, Dody, that will do; prop me up, please. There, that's right. Charity is a good old soul; she came here as soon as she knew I was ill, and has been with me ever since. I hope she will come and see me before long."

"She certainly will," replied Theodora, sitting down on the edge of the bed, and taking one of her mother's hands between both of hers in a caressing way. "She is good. I wanted her to leave when I came; but she insisted on staying, and she's mended everything the boys own. She actually went up in the attic and looked over their winter clothes, for she said you ought not to be bothered with them. Wasn't it thoughtful of her?"

"Just what I might have expected," said Mrs. Hartwell, with a smile; "she is one of the largest-hearted women I ever knew."

Theodora assented, and Mrs. Hartwell closed her eyes and remained quiet for some time; then she asked, somewhat suddenly, "Where is your father?"

"Gone with the boys on a naturalizing expedition; so there is no knowing when they will be home."

Mrs. Hartwell again closed her eyes, but she seemed to be earnestly thinking about something, — something which evidently troubled her."

"Mother, do you want anything?" asked Theodora, gently.

"Theodora, my darling, I want to tell you something, — something which it will be very hard for me to say, and harder yet for you to hear; but for my sake try to be calm, try to help me, for we may not be free from interruptions again for a long while."

Theodora clasped her mother's hand closer within her own. Her heart beat violently, then seemed to stand still, while an indescribable feeling of faintness went

through her whole frame. What her fears were she could not have defined; but her mother's manner was so serious and singular that she knew she was about to hear something which would deeply affect her; but she controlled herself, and striving not to let her voice betray the apprehension she really felt, she so far succeeded as to say in a clear, but low voice:—

“I'll try to be quiet, motherdy. Is it about yourself?”

“Yes, darling, it is,—be calm, my darling, for my sake be calm,—it is that—I do not think I shall live long. Don't tremble so, dear; try, oh, try to control yourself! Drink the rest of that wine. There! that will strengthen you; your hands are icy cold. O Theodora! if I could only bear it for you! But I think, if you knew how I have dreaded and dreaded to tell you, you would do your best to calm yourself, for there is so much that I cannot say to any one but you,—to you, my oldest child, my faithful, devoted daughter.”

“Mother, wait! wait one moment!” broke in Theodora, burying her head in her hands and struggling so hard to control herself that the veins in her neck and temples stood out like fine cords; “don't speak yet, don't; I *can't* bear it.”

“Theodora, my child, my darling, lay your head down here beside me,—so. Now remember that what I say, I say because I must; that every word is a struggle for me, and unless you promise to control yourself I shall have to wait until some other time, and that will only be making it doubly hard for both of us.”

Theodora laid herself down beside her mother, and, hiding her face in the pillow, remained quiet for a few minutes, while her mother gently laid her arm about her, and smoothed the hair away from her throbbing temples. The mute tenderness of the caress overcame, while at the

same time it soothed her; for the first time since her mother had spoken, the tears began to flow, and for a few moments she wept quietly, uninterrupted by her mother, who still passed her hand gently over her hair. Soon Theodora grew calmer, and said in a low voice, as she turned and softly kissed her mother, "Now tell me all you wish; I will help you all I can."

"That is my own darling. I knew that for my sake you would control yourself. You may think it strange, dear, that I should tell you, rather than your father, but I know that I could never make him believe that there was any more danger now than there has been for years past. The doctor has said that I may not have another attack for months, perhaps years; but no one can tell how, or when, death may come in a disease like mine. Theodora, my constant prayer is, that I may die quietly, and not in one of those agonies of pain, when it seems as if my heart was held in an iron hand which was slowly closing tighter and tighter over it. But we will not talk of that now; perhaps I shall be spared that suffering, and I want to speak to you about the duties and cares which must come to you. My poor darling, it will be a heavy load for such young shoulders to bear, but I know the needed strength will be given you."

"Mother, dear," said Theodora, who had succeeded in mastering her own emotions and now thought only of saving her mother useless agitation, "don't think so much of me; rest a while; you will be worn out; you are too weak to talk so much. See how quiet I have grown; wait until to-morrow; I promise to listen calmly then."

"Thank you, Dody dear." (How infinitely sweet and beautiful sounded the odd pet name when spoken in such tender tones!) "I don't feel so weak as I did. The thought of what I had to say to you took all my strength away."

Now that you know the worst, I should feel better to go on. About your father, dear; Theodora, a kinder, more affectionate, truer-hearted man never lived. When I married him many wondered that I should have chosen a man so many years older than myself; but I loved him as I never could have loved a younger man. I say this to you now, so that if ever, when you hold the place of mistress of this house, little things occur to try your patience in any way, you may think of my words. Your father has a great many peculiarities, little defects which you may never have noticed, which I remember in our early married life amused, rather than annoyed, me, simply because they were of such a nature that they did not materially affect us, or our condition, so long as we had everything in the world to do with; but when our reverses came, when I had to contrive in every way to make both ends meet, then I learned for the first time that it is the little faults we don't notice or think much about that are the hardest for us to contend with. I had a quick temper then, Dody, and I *know* that when your father's procrastination, or his ideal way of looking at things, irritated me, I spoke hastily, even angrily to him; but never once did I receive an unkind retort from him. No, never in all our married life has he spoken a hasty or harsh word to me. I do not think there are many wives who can say that. Now, darling, don't you see what I want you to guard against? I cannot tell you in what way your patience will be tried, but I know it will be; but remember that your father is growing old; that he has had cares and trials enough to break down any man who had not such a naturally cheerful, sweet disposition; and if ever, my darling, your tongue is inclined to be rebellious, think of this little talk with me, and be patient, for that is the one thing needful. And the boys, — my dear, good boys, — how I love them!

They will never willingly give you any trouble ; besides, you know their dispositions as well as I. You have always been a good sister. I have no fears but that you will be a mother to them when I am gone."

Mrs. Hartwell ceased stroking Theodora's hair, and stretched her arm over her in a closer embrace. Theodora was about to speak, when her mother continued, but in a different tone, more as if she were talking to herself: "I remember so well the first day I came to Hartwell Farm ; it was in the afternoon, at sunset, just about this time. How lovely everything was ! The whole place was in a glow with the golden light ; the house looked as if it were illuminated ; every pane reflected the sun's rays. I thought then that that was the happiest day of my life ; but a year after, when I sat on the porch with my baby, my little Theodora, in my arms, I think I was even happier."

Her voice grew fainter ; the words dragged ; Theodora thought she was falling asleep, and would not move for fear of disturbing her. The low, sweet voice began again, but this time more broken, more wandering than before : "We were so happy. Don't you remember how you laughed at me that day, Richard ? Here, dear, don't you see her ? Take her, — the baby, — I'm so tired, I think I'll go to sleep."

"Mother !" whispered Theodora softly, "mother !" No answer. Gently disengaging herself from her mother's close embrace, Theodora rose from the bed, and as she did so, stooped and kissed the sweet face before her.

She started back with a look of horror in her eyes, for the lips she pressed were cold and still. "Mother ! mother ! speak to me ! answer me ! don't you hear me ? don't you hear your own Theodora ?" But no response came to her heart-rending cry ; her mother's prayer had been answered ; quietly, without a struggle, she had sunk

into a painless sleep from which no earthly voice could waken her.

Theodora gazed on her a moment in agonized silence; she felt her hands; she took them in her own; she pressed them to her cheeks, her lips; she kissed her once again; and as the fearful reality dawned upon her, she uttered a low cry, in which all the grief, despair, and pent-up agony of her heart found utterance, and fell senseless beside the dead body of her mother.

CHAPTER XV.

THEODORA TAKES UP HER BURDEN.

GRADUALLY animation returned to Theodora's senseless frame. She lay for some time in a state of semi-consciousness, faintly hearing the rustling of the curtains, as they were swayed gently back and forth in the breeze; the chirping of a cricket near the window, and the singing of the birds outside; but her senses were not fully restored; her mind had not roused itself sufficiently to realize anything else; but suddenly through the open window came her father's voice, followed by a shout of laughter from the boys. That sound seemed to pierce to her brain. She sprang to her feet, her mind now fully alive to the terrible blow which had fallen upon her, the first shock of which had, in mercy, left it a blank.

The last rays of the setting sun were flooding the room with a soft, rosy light. Over the peaceful face of the dead mother they cast their mellow radiance, and as they had shone upon her on that day of her early wifehood to which her thoughts had returned in their last moments, so now they shone full upon her in death, touching those still features with such life-like color that it seemed as if the eyes must uncloze, the lips must move and speak with all their accustomed tenderness.

It was too much for Theodora to bear; she went to the window, and silently, but with a quick, almost fierce movement, closed the blinds, and shut out the sunlight, which seemed as if it were mocking her with its bright-

ness She turned again to the bed, and, casting herself on her knees, bowed her head in prayer; her lips remained closed; no sound escaped them; but from her heart went up such touching cries for some light to shine through all the darkness which overwhelmed her, for strength, not only to bear her own burden, but to comfort and uphold those left to her as a sacred charge, that the spirit of her mother, as it wafted its way towards heaven, must have paused in its flight to listen, to gather those supplications in her heart, that she herself might lay them at the foot of "The Great White Throne."

Rising from her knees, Theodora stood for a few moments and gazed silently, with tightly clasped hands, but with eyes from which the tears refused to flow, at the quiet face before her, then with an effort tore herself from the room. As she softly closed the door behind her, her father came down the hall, holding in his hand a small bunch of bright autumn leaves and scarlet berries.

"See, Dody," he said; "aren't they beautiful? They make me think of the day I first brought your mother to Hartwell Farm. I wonder if she will think of it too?"

Theodora stood with her hand on the door, trembling in every limb; how could she break the terrible news to him? Her tongue seemed paralyzed. Her father was busy rearranging the leaves, and did not notice her silence; but as he made a movement to pass her and open the door, she put out her hand and prevented him; her breath came quick and short; she gasped hoarsely, "Father — wait; — not yet; not yet — mother is —"

At the sound of her voice her father had turned sharply and looked at her; her white lips, the despair and grief in her eyes, the supplicating gesture of one hand, while with the other she still guarded the door,

revealed to him in an instant all that her lips refused to speak. With an expression on his face, which to her dying day Theodora will never forget, he laid his hand on hers, which still clasped the handle of the door; gently unclosing her fingers, he said, in a voice which seemed as if it came from another world: —

“My child, I know; it has come. Let me go to her alone.”

As the door closed behind him, Theodora leaned against the wall and pressed her hands to her heart. She waited for some time, fearing to hear some sound from within the room; but the silence was awful. What she had feared she now almost hoped for; a sob, a groan, anything rather than this fearful quiet; yet not for worlds would she have intruded on the sacredness of her father's grief. As she stood thus in suspense, she heard the boys talking in excited tones downstairs, evidently disputing for the possession of some treasure found during their walk; she ran down instantly, and, before they were aware of her entrance, stood in their midst.

“Boys, boys,” she said, in a tone of entreaty, “for Heaven's sake don't quarrel now; I have something dreadful to tell you.”

Her tone, even more than her words, awed them into silence; they stood and looked at her with frightened faces. Frank was the first to speak: —

“What is it, Theodora, — is mother worse?”

“Not worse, we *must* not think she is worse; but, O boys, it breaks my heart to tell you; you must prepare yourselves for the worst. Ralph, let me take you in my lap, — so, — it helps me. Boys, our mother — is dead.”

It was over; the terrible task, the execution of which of necessity had fallen to her lot, was done. The boys crowded round her; they clung to her as if already acknowleg-

ing her as their comforter and support; their sobs alone broke the silence. Dick leaned against her chair and threw one arm over her shoulder, bowing his head until it touched hers. Frank knelt on the floor and buried his head in the folds of her dress. Ralph, the youngest, who was still looked upon as the baby, threw his arms around her neck, sobbing, "O Dody! Dody! what shall we do? You'll have to be mother now."

At his words the tears, which had hitherto refused to flow, rushed to her eyes, and Theodora wept unrestrainedly.

But she could not long give such full vent to her grief; she must still think of some one else; she dared not leave her father any longer. She explained all to the boys, and they allowed her to leave them; she was gone but a moment, when she returned, and, taking Ralph by the hand, motioned for the others to follow her.

They entered softly the room they had so often rushed into with boyish, headlong haste; but she who had always greeted their coming with a smile turned not at their approach. By the bedside, with bowed head, looking as though years instead of moments had elapsed since he entered that chamber, sat their father; one of his wife's hands he held clasped in his own; in the other he had placed the bunch of autumn leaves.

As they gathered round him, he raised his head, looked at them for a moment with infinite tenderness, then said, in a calm, low voice, "My children, let us pray."

CHAPTER XVI.

DARK DAYS.

SEVERAL months have elapsed since Mrs. Hartwell's death, and it is the middle of winter, when we again find ourselves at Hartwell Farm. Theodora has taken up all the household duties which had formerly been her mother's, all the responsibilities, and the numberless small cares, which of themselves are not of much account, but which go far towards making up the sum of a woman's daily existence. It was no light burden which had fallen upon those young shoulders; she bore it cheerfully and well, but its weight was beginning to tell upon her; she was much thinner than in the summer; her bright color had somewhat faded, and when alone, her face wore an anxious, troubled expression quite foreign to its former brightness.

No wonder that, as she sat by herself mending the well-worn clothes of the family, a sigh sometimes escaped her, and the work dropped from her hands as she leaned her head upon them and pondered how they were ever to get through the winter with their fast decreasing means. She had been brought up to be economical in her own expenditures, and her wants had always been few and easily satisfied; her mother had always explained to her that their means would not admit of this or that luxury, and she had accepted the fact without any great feeling of regret that it was not otherwise; but she had never known, never imagined, that



A TRUE HEROINE.



they were literally poor. She realized for the first time how her mother must have contrived and pinched in every way to allow them the actual comforts of life, and at the same time make both ends meet.

Her father gave her money from time to time, but in very small amounts; still she knew it was all he had to give, but she could not make him understand that it was not enough to meet their daily expenditures; it paid a bill or two, but not half they owed. It was like half feeding a hungry child; one knows that in a short time it will cry again, when there will be nothing to give it. Whenever Theodora tried to explain matters to her father, he always said, in his gentle way, "We must retrench; we must retrench for the present; by and by the 'peach orchard' will bring us out all right." Poor Theodora! as if she had not already retrenched in every possible way; and as for the peach orchard, it was more a source of anxiety to her than of comfort, for her father dwelt upon it so much that she dared not think what effect its failure might have upon him. She realized now something of what her mother had implied when she had spoken of her father's peculiarities; she learned daily that to him she must not apply for any practical aid out of her fast-increasing difficulties; more than once she had been half inclined to be angry with him for his want of forethought, but the remembrance of her mother's dying words chased all such emotions from her heart, if they had not been already dispersed by the sight of that dear father himself. Mr. Hartwell was sadly changed; he was, if anything, more quiet and abstracted than ever, but it was not the same kind of abstraction; formerly, when indulging in a reverie, he had a habit of sitting with his head thrown back; now it was always drooped, — a little thing, but to Theodora it told much. She knew that his thoughts, instead of wandering among

the labyrinths of science, were dwelling upon her dead mother, and the one aim of her life, the prayer of her heart was, that she might learn to fill that mother's place.

Her devotion to her father was beautiful to see; she never forgot or omitted one of the many little affectionate attentions, conducive either to his comfort or pleasure, which she had always been in the habit of seeing her mother lavish upon him; she anticipated all his wants, and did everything for him in such an unobtrusive way that he never so much realized that *she* was doing it as that it was still done.

In her young days Mrs. Hartwell had played the piano with much more than ordinary skill, and she had never allowed herself to entirely desert her music; she had always been in the habit of playing to her family every evening. From her Theodora had acquired some knowledge of music, at least sufficient to enable her to play simple airs, which pleased her father and the boys; and notwithstanding her many cares, she contrived to practise a little every day, studying carefully all those pieces which had been the especial favorites of her father and mother. It was with trembling hands that she had first touched the keys after her mother's death. She had pondered in her own mind, whether the recollections which the sound of the instrument would bring up would not be too much for her father to bear; whether her playing in contrast with that of her mother's, even the sight of her in her mother's place, would not jar upon him; but with exquisite tact she had divined, that to a man of his age and peculiar temperament the sudden breaking up, the entire withdrawal, of what had always been to him a source of great happiness would affect him more deeply than its continuance under different circumstances. As I have said, it was with trembling fingers

and loudly beating heart that she first attempted to play to her father. She chose one of the simplest of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words." She dared not look at her father as he sat in his accustomed seat by the fire, but played on, letting her heart speak through her fingers. As the last chords died away, her father raised his head and said, with even more than his usual gentleness, "Theodora, you have your mother's touch, your mother's expression; in time you will have her skill; my child, it comforts me." No need to say that Theodora redoubled her efforts to improve. If it had not have been for many such proofs that she was a comfort and help to her father and brothers, Theodora would have sometimes grown thoroughly discouraged; but no matter how tired or anxious she might be, if they showed that she was necessary to them in any way, if they bestowed upon her the little caresses or endearing names which they had been in the habit of giving their mother, she felt her burden grow lighter, and went to work with renewed vigor to smoothe the tangled skein of household affairs. She was trying one day to see some way out of their many difficulties; wondering how she could raise some money before the day when the small and only sure dividend which Mr. Hartwell now received should fall due, when suddenly it occurred to her that perhaps her father would be willing to write articles for some of the leading magazines of the day. The idea seemed to her such a bright one, so thoroughly practical and feasible, that she immediately put down her work and went into the library where Mr. Hartwell was at that moment seated at his desk.

"Father," she exclaimed abruptly, "didn't you use to write for the magazines?"

Her father looked at her over his spectacles, in sur-

prise. "Write for the magazines, my dear child, — what do you mean?"

"Why, just what I say; didn't you ever send articles to some of the leading magazines, or scientific papers, and get paid for them?"

"No, my dear, never; several articles of mine have been published, but I never received any money for them."

"But wouldn't they pay you; did you do it for nothing?"

"Certainly not, my dear; they paid for them, but I never accepted anything myself. I always agreed beforehand that the money should go to some charitable institution, or to some poor scholar struggling against pecuniary difficulties."

"But, father, that was when you were rich, when you had more than you needed to spend; now of course you would feel differently."

"My dear, what are you driving at?" with a slight tinge of annoyance in his tone. "You certainly don't mean to say that you think that at my age I am going to devote myself to writing merely for the sake of the dollars and cents it might bring me?"

"But I *do* mean it," persisted Theodora, earnestly, whose pressing need made her urge the matter much more strongly than she would otherwise thought of doing; "why, some of your own old friends, some of the most talented men, the greatest thinkers of the time, think it no condescension to do it; they support their families by their pens."

"My dear child, I hope you don't think I'm either so vain or so foolish as to consider it would be condescension on my part to receive money for anything I might write. Far from it; it is simply that I am so organized that I *could not* write anything if I knew I was to be paid for

it; I could *not* do it. There would be no ease, no elegance, no force, to anything I wrote; my thoughts would not frame themselves into intelligent sentences; I could not disabuse myself of the idea th t I was doing so much work for so much money; it would be drudgery; in short, being paid by the page instead of by the day. No, no, Theodora, don't suggest such a thing again; your mother did it once, but I convinced her that it was entirely out of the question. I am afraid you are growing mercenary, Theodora. But run away now, you have interrupted a train of thought that I've been two hours trying to get into comprehensible form."

And Theodora did go away thoroughly discouraged, and a trifle — yes, we must confess it — a trifle out of patience with her father. Was it to be wondered at? Was it strange that she relapsed into one of those melancholy moods with which we are all of us more or less afflicted, when we find ourselves taking a gloomy satisfaction in looking on the dark side of things? Theodora was not a solitary exception to the rule of human nature, she had moments of being very blue and morbid; then she was apt to let her thoughts revert to herself and think that the fault lay there. She wished that she might do something which would bring money into the family treasury; she despised herself for not being able to earn any; she looked upon her daily life of patching and darning, turning and twisting, planning and contriving, as something immeasurably small and insignificant. She had been darning old clothes all day long, — clothes for the boys that once she would not have considered fit to be worn; it was anything but pleasant work: besides, she was tired bodily as well as mentally. The old longing to do something above and beyond this never-ending round of household drudgery, the work which she said to herself any unintelligent servant-girl could do as

well as she, stirred again in her heart. Oh, if she could only strike out boldly and achieve something which should be the means of dispelling the cloud of poverty and debt which was fast settling upon Hartwell Farm! "Then," she said to herself, "perhaps I might feel that I had done something which might be called heroic." As she spoke the word, it recalled vividly to her mind the scene at Scranton alluded to in one of the early chapters of this book. She saw Mr. Hudson as distinctly as though he still stood before her; she heard his kind voice repeating, "Go back to your quiet home, but always carry with you the wish to do something heroic, 'for the glory of the thing itself,' and you will surely find, as every one finds who looks at life as something given us for a higher purpose than for mere enjoyment, that there is in the most quiet life in the world something to do, something to bear. *Do* whatever your hand finds to do with all your might, *bear* whatever trial, small or great, may come to you, with Christ-like patience, and who shall say you may not be a heroine?" The anxious, discontented expression vanished from her face; for the first time she realized that to do, to bear, to suffer whatever is sent to us, no matter in what homely form it may appear, has in it the elements of heroism. She smiled as she thought of her own words spoken with no thought of how soon they would return to her,— "to do something grand, not for the fuss and talk people would make about her, but for the glory of the thing itself." Certainly there would be no one to make a fuss about her; perhaps there was little *glory* in the thing itself; but she felt in an undefined, but convincing way, that into her hands had been placed tools, rough and heavy to handle, but which, if she used them rightly, would carve her life into some semblance of the heroic one of which she had dreamed.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STORM.

"WHAT paper is that you are reading, Theodora?"

"The 'Boston Journal' of March 3d. Uncle Temple sent it to me, because it has a very complimentary notice of a book written by a friend of mine, — Mr. Thurston Lee. Would you like to see it?"

"No, I thank you," replied Mr. Hartwell, continuing his walk up and down the long sitting-room. "If there is anything in it which you think will interest me, you may mark it, and I'll read it by and by."

"Father," began Theodora, holding the paper so as to conceal her face, then stopping suddenly as if fearing or dreading to continue.

"Well, Theodora, what is it? Don't be long, for I fear there is a storm coming up, and I must go and look after the peach-orchard."

"There *is* something in this paper which I think may interest you," said Theodora, speaking hurriedly and nervously; "it is an advertisement for a farm."

"An advertisement for a farm? Well, my child, I am afraid you are laughing at me behind your paper. One farm is quite as much as I can manage; I don't think I care for another."

"It isn't an advertisement to *sell*, but to buy a farm. I thought,— that is, I didn't know, but what you might like to sell part of your land."

Mr. Hartwell stopped in the middle of the room, and

looked at Theodora in astonishment. She had dropped the newspaper and taken up her work; but she was only making a pretence of sewing; she could not see the seam through which she was diligently plying her needle. For weeks she had been trying to make up her mind to propose to her father to sell part of his immense estate; for unless some such step was taken she could not see what was to become of them. Absolute poverty stared them in the face, while for miles around them lay their own land, not bringing them in sufficient income to supply their table with the simplest food. The facts were plain and bare enough; she felt that it was no longer any use to put off the evil day; she must, at any cost, make her father realize that some stringent measures were positively and immediately necessary.

Before Mr. Hartwell could speak she continued: "Father, I know you have no idea in what a terrible strait we are placed. I have been as economical as I could; I have bought nothing for myself or the boys, although they are sadly in want of new clothes. Joe and Sarah have not been paid for more than six months. I have heavy bills for groceries, coal, etc., and not a dollar to pay them with. Besides," she went on, hurriedly, "Dick must soon enter college, unless you have given up the idea of sending him, and how is he to go?"

"There, there, child, you have made out a list of misfortunes long enough to frighten any man. It grieves me more than you can think to have you so worried about money matters; but what can I do? We must get along somehow until the peach crop is ripe; then I know we shall be able to pay all the bills."

"But, father!" exclaimed Theodora, in despair, "here it is only the first of March; if there are peaches enough to amount to anything, they won't be ripe before

September, and meanwhile *what* are we to do? Why won't you sell some of the land,—just enough to set us right again?"

"My dear, you are talking of what you evidently know nothing. I inherited the whole of Hartwell Farm from my father; but with one condition, and that was, that it should never, under any circumstances, be divided, during my lifetime. So you see I could not, if I wished, sell part without the whole."

"Then," exclaimed Theodora, desperately, "sell the whole."

"Sell the Hartwell Farm!" cried her father, for the first time in his life speaking to her with something like anger in his tone, — "sell the Hartwell Farm, where I was born and have lived all my life, and my father and my grandfather before me! Theodora, what has possessed you? You are the last one of all my children from whom I should have expected such a proposition. I have often heard you speak with affectionate pride of the old oak-tree, which is just the age of the house, and has withstood storms and winds for over a century. You know the family superstition as well as I do, that when that tree dies the Hartwell Farm will pass into other hands; look at it now, it is as fresh and green as when your great-grandfather planted it! Why, Theodora, I don't understand you at all; I thought you loved the old place."

"And I do love it, father," replied Theodora, struggling to keep back the tears; "I never knew how well till now; it would almost break my heart to leave it."

"Then don't talk about it any more," said Mr. Hartwell, all his temporary anger vanishing in a moment. "I must find some other alternative; for to sell Hartwell Farm is something which would never have

occurred to me. I must go out now. Don't worry your head, dear, about money matters; we shall come out all right in time."

"Father, I wouldn't go out. See how dark it has grown, and how strange the sky looks; we are going to have a terrible storm, I know. Just hear the wind; it blows fearfully."

"I know it; that is why I must go," replied her father, putting a bundle of strong twine into his pocket and taking up his hat. "I shan't be gone long; but I never let any one touch those peach-trees but myself."

As the door closed after him, Theodora leaned her head against the low window-sill and indulged in a good, hearty cry. She could not help it; her last hope had deserted her; where she was to turn next for assistance was more than she could imagine. But she did not long remain in that position; the sound of the rain, as it came suddenly dashing against the panes, made her start up quickly. The storm had begun with great fury, doors were banging in various parts of the house, and Theodora ran upstairs to close any window which might have been left open. The wind grew stronger and stronger; it fairly shrieked round the corners of the house. As she stood looking out, a young elm near by was twisted off its trunk as easily as if it had been a twig; the branches of the trees lashed themselves against each other as though possessed by so many demons, and the driving rain, beating against them, looked almost like foam as they dashed it from their writhing arms. The sky grew blacker every moment; although yet early in the afternoon it seemed as dark as at twilight.

The storm increased with amazing rapidity. Never but once had Theodora seen anything so terrific, and that was the memorable September gale of 'sixty-

nine. She ran downstairs to see if her father had yet returned; but neither he nor the boys were there. Hastily putting on her rubbers and throwing her waterproof over her, she took an umbrella and started to go in search of him. As she opened the outer door the force of the wind almost took her off her feet; she called loudly to Sarah to come and close the door after her. That good woman begged her not to go, or to allow her to take her place; but Theodora knew that if any danger assailed her father's darling orchard, it would take more than Sarah's influence to drag him away from it. The umbrella turned inside out before she could raise it over her head, and, throwing it aside, she hurried on, although she was forced more than once to stop and gasp for breath.

The orchard was some distance from the house, and when she reached its borders her father was nowhere to be seen. She shouted, but her voice was overpowered by the storm, which had already begun its work. Great branches lay about in every direction, while others writhed about half detached from the trees. She ran down to the extreme end of the immense orchard, and there found her father, his hat off, no overcoat to protect him from the drenching rain, striving with all his might to prop and secure the branches of one of his pet trees.

"Father, you must come in; indeed you must," she cried; "you will catch your death of cold if you stay here. Come with me."

"Run back, run back; don't mind me. I can't go in; I must tie this somehow. I want some rope; this twine is worth nothing. If I don't do something every tree will be ruined!"

He spoke excitedly. Theodora had never seen him so unlike his usual self. She took his hat and forced him

to put it on. At that moment a tree directly in front of them was twisted off close to the ground.

"Father, it is worse than useless for you to stay here; you can do nothing; you *must* come," said Theodora.

She took hold of his arm with both hands, and almost dragged him from the spot. Together they struggled along. The young trees were cracking and snapping about them at every step. Theodora was thankful when they passed out of the orchard, for at the sound of every falling tree her father had groaned as though he had received a blow. As they came out on to the lawn she turned her eyes anxiously towards the old oak. It was still safe; it held up its head proudly against the storm; its branches were too mighty to be tossed about even by such a raging wind as that which now howled through them. They resisted it, alas, too strongly; if they had yielded, if they had but bowed a little at its command, it perhaps might have been standing for years to come. As Theodora and her father neared the porch they heard a strange, tearing sound behind them; they turned suddenly; at that instant the grand old oak tottered, wavered for a second in mid air, then fell with a crash which shook the ground beneath their feet, and lay helpless and prone, its great roots struggling among the smaller trees it had crushed in its descent.

Theodora could not suppress an exclamation of grief and almost horror as she saw it going. She turned quickly to her father; his face was positively ghastly; but he stood for a moment and looked at it like one who looks on the face of a dead friend, then said, in a hoarse voice, "Theodora, you only anticipated Fate. The Hartwell Farm must pass into other hands; the prophecy will be fulfilled;" then, with bowed head, looking altogether crushed and broken, he passed into the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PROPHECY IS FULFILLED.

THE storm passed away almost as quickly as it came, and the next morning the sun smiled down on Hartwell Farm as placidly as though no blight had fallen upon it. But everywhere traces of the destroying elements might be found ; it seemed as if the raging wind had paused in its course and vented its fury on that place alone. The house, thanks to its solid frame and brick walls, had suffered no injury, save a few broken panes of glass ; but the rickety old out-buildings and dilapidated fences were almost all completely destroyed, and lay about in helpless wrecks ; while in every direction the eye might turn it was met by the sight of trees, either torn up by the roots or broken and split to pieces.

Theodora had laid awake almost all night dreading for the morning to come. She hardly dared to speak of the storm to her father, although the boys, of course, made it their one topic of conversation at the breakfast-table, but Mr. Hartwell himself hardly mentioned it ; indeed I doubt very much if he heard a word that was said ; he seemed like a man walking in his sleep, unconscious of everything around him.

Theodora watched him with anxious eyes as he took his hat and went out without speaking to any one. She saw him go slowly across the lawn in the direction of the old oak ; she had thought that he would have avoided it ; but no, he walked up to it, and stood for some time per-

fectly still, looking at it. It lay there ruined, but grand even in its downfall, and through its branches and across its mighty trunk the morning sunlight danced and flickered. Theodora saw her father put out his hand and lay it on it, not with a firm, hearty slap, as people are apt to touch a great, living tree, but gently, tenderly, passing it up and down in a caressing way that made the tears come to Theodora's eyes as she watched him; for a moment he stood thus, then turned and walked away in the direction of the orchard.

An hour later, as Theodora sat at her work, he came into the room and took his usual seat by the fire. For some time silence reigned throughout the room, for there was something in her father's face and expression akin to that which it had worn at the moment when he entered alone the chamber of his dead wife, which made Theodora feel that she should not be the first to speak. At last Mr. Hartwell turned to her and said, "Theodora, I was very hasty yesterday. I thought your proposition to sell Hartwell Farm was foolish, — worse than foolish. I cannot tell you how it affected me; but now I see too plainly that it is the only thing to be done." He paused a moment, and leaned his head on his hand, then continued: "My last hope, the peach-orchard, has entirely failed me; it is a hopeless ruin. Yes, it has failed, like so many others of my many experiments, and I shall never try another; no, never. All I ask now is, Theodora, that you will take the responsibility of selling the farm. Don't trouble me about it; I am growing old; I am not fit to attend to it; only sell it, sell it as soon as possible."

Theodora left her seat when her father began speaking, and went and stood behind his chair, her hand resting on his shoulder, as she looked down at him with tears in her eyes. It was something so entirely new for him to be

so completely crushed and disheartened by the failure of one of his many experiments, that her first thought was, not how she could relieve herself of this new responsibility that was being laid upon her, but of what she could do to rouse her father from the state of utter hopelessness into which he had fallen.

"Father," she said, "perhaps we can think of some other plan. Couldn't you get a farmer to manage the place for you, — some one whom you could trust, and who would be interested to try and bring it up to what it used to be? Then you need not sell it."

"No, Theodora, I tried that plan once, and it failed. I placed my entire confidence in a man who betrayed me; I could never try it again. Then I undertook to carry on the farm myself, and I have brought it to what it now is. I hoped it would never leave the family; but it is no use. it must go. The boys will not be old enough to carry it on for several years, and would have nothing to start with even if they cared about it; and you, Dody, you to whom I thought to leave the house, because you are the only woman I can bear to think of as filling your mother's place in it, are the one to whom I turn for aid; on you I rely to save me all the trouble, all the anxiety, in regard to selling the place. Will you do it for me, Dody?"

For the first time Theodora realized all he asked of her. Despite his tone of entreaty, she could not help exclaiming, "Why, father, you surely don't mean that you expect me to attend to the business of selling Hartwell Farm? I don't know anything about such things; I don't even know how much the place is worth."

"I don't know myself," replied her father; "it was never appraised when it was left to me. There was no need of it; I was the only heir, and it came to me unencumbered. Your Uncle John says it has increased twenty

per cent. in value since the railroad ran along the north side ; but I don't know anything about it ; you may write and advise with him ; he will tell you, better than I can, what to do. I can't think about it ; when I try my brain is in hopeless confusion ; spare me as much as you can, Theodora, for I am growing old ; I am growing old."

Indeed, Mr. Hartwell had sadly aged within the last six months ; he was not quite seventy, but without being either feeble or in ill-health he looked older than most men of his age. Perhaps I have failed to draw his character so as to present it in its true light, for it is indeed a difficult one to portray ; it cannot be done by strong, bold lines, with a few vigorous dashes,—all must be vague, shadowy, ideal. Perhaps, to many, his may seem a weak nature ; and yet such is not the idea I have wished to convey, but rather that of a man to whom everything that is practical and matter-of-fact in this world is entirely foreign ; something which he recognizes and admires in others, but which he could no more cultivate in himself than he could insure the success of any of his wild experiments.

Since his wife's death, the only thing in which he had taken any active interest was his peach-orchard,—a visionary, impracticable scheme, as we all know ; but it had been his one hobby for three years, the only thing which could drag him away from his books ; and now that it was taken from him, he seemed like some one who has been suddenly deprived of some needed stimulant.

Overpowering as the responsibility of selling the farm appeared to Theodora, she resolved to undertake it when she saw the condition her father was in. She wrote immediately to her Uncle John for advice in regard to what measures she should take, and what price she ought to ask, and he replied at once, mentioning a sum which seemed to her almost fabulous, and strongly advising her

to entrust the entire management of the sale to a reliable real-estate agent whom he mentioned. Theodora hailed the plan with delight; but when she suggested it to her father, he shook his head decidedly, and positively forbade such a course. He would not trust his farm, however indirectly, to any stranger; he had been betrayed in regard to it once, and it had made him suspicious of every one. The only thing Theodora now saw for her to do was to answer the advertisement in the "Journal" which she had seen the day before. She did so, and, to her no small surprise, in about a week received a short, business-like letter from a gentleman, who signed himself "F. A. Carlyle," stating that if agreeable to Mr. Hartwell, he would send his agent, Mr. Downs, to examine the property, with regard to an immediate purchase, provided they could come to satisfactory terms. The letter was dated from a large western city, and Theodora lost no time in answering it, saying, in as few words as possible, that she would be ready to receive Mr. Downs at any time, but that Mr. Hartwell must be excused from any participation in the matter, except the necessary signing of papers. Before she had fairly made up her mind what she should do when Mr. Downs arrived, he presented himself. Theodora had hoped that Dick would be there to go over the place with the agent; but he was off somewhere with her father, and she was obliged to offer her services. Mr. Downs examined the house, and went over as much of the land as was possible in the short time he could remain, and Theodora went with him everywhere. No one could describe the complication of feelings which filled her mind as she rode with him from one part of the farm to another, answered all his questions clearly and concisely, pointed out this or that piece of woodland, or called his attention to everything about the place which she had ever heard spoken of as particularly advantageous.

Mr. Downs was a middle-aged man, very polite and considerate. If he experienced any surprise that so young a person should have the responsibility of the sale of such an immense estate, he kept it to himself, and, promising to report immediately to Mr. Carlyle, he took leave of her with a most dignified, respectful farewell.

But why go into all the details, which are necessarily so dry and uninteresting? Why attempt to portray all the doubts and fears which Theodora experienced while the matter was pending? Suffice it to say that, in a short time, Theodora received a letter from Mr. Carlyle himself, in which he accepted her terms, and stated at what day she might expect Mr. Downs to attend to the business of the examination of the title-deeds and conclude the bargain. And so, almost before Theodora could realize it, the whole thing was settled, and the prophecy fulfilled: the Hartwell Farm had passed into other hands.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PURCHASER ARRIVES.

A DAY or two after the final interview with Mr. Downs, Theodora entered the library holding an open letter in her hand. Mr. Hartwell looked up as she approached his desk and asked, "Well, Theodora, what is it now?"

"A letter from Mr. Carlyle, he has —"

"Ah!" interrupted Mr. Hartwell, "I suppose he wishes to take immediate possession; well, I ought to have expected as much."

"But he doesn't, father," replied Theodora. "Let me read you the letter, and see what you think of it: —"

"C — , April 5, 187 —."

"MISS HARTWELL: —"

"Dear Madam: I presume Mr. Downs informed you that I would write myself and let you know when I should wish to take possession of the Hartwell Farm. Before coming to a final decision on the matter, I have a favor to ask of you, namely, that you will induce Mr. Hartwell to remain in the house during the summer, and allow me to make one of his family. I can offer no excuse for so singular a request, for so I feel it must seem, coming as it does from an entire stranger, except the fact that I am a single man, and do not care to undertake house-keeping at the same time with so great a responsibility as the care of the farm will be. If Mr. Hartwell should agree to my proposition, it will be with the distinct understanding that the house is virtually his until this agreement between us shall be dissolved, and that during that time I have no control over it whatever. I have no desire to thrust myself upon him or his family; but as most of my time will necessarily be spent out of doors,

I think I can promise to be no inconvenience, while I should look upon such an arrangement as a great favor conferred upon myself.

"Hoping to receive a favorable answer from you at the earliest opportunity, stating at what time Mr. Hartwell would be ready to receive me, I remain, dear madam,

"Your obedient servant,

"F. A. CARLYLE."

"There, father, what do you think of that?"

"A very straightforward, respectful letter. He asks a favor for himself, while at the same time he confers one upon us; for the rent of the house would far outweigh any trouble or expense he would be to us, and he evidently intends that one should offset the other. But after all, Theodora, I shall leave it to you to decide the question, for on you would come any inconvenience there might be in having him here."

"I don't believe he would be much trouble; of course I judge of him by his letters; his 'Dear madam' amuses me intensely. I fancy he is a quiet, middle-aged man, and I don't believe I should mind him so very much. Besides, I must own that the prospect of staying here another summer would be sufficient inducement for me to undertake to be landlady for a very captious, fractious old gentleman, and I can't think that Mr. Carlyle is one."

"No, I should say, from the tone of his letters, that he was decidedly a gentleman of the 'old school.' His name is evidently Scotch; if he has much of the Scotch element in his character I have no doubt but that I shall find him a person quite suited to my tastes. Yes, Theodora, I agree with you, that the prospect of remaining here during the summer outweighs every other consideration. It will be a good thing for us all. How glad the boys will be!"

"Yes, I know they will; they are delighted now

with the novelty of living in the city, but they would find it hard to leave here when the time came."

"Yes, it will be hard enough for us all, hard enough," replied Mr. Hartwell; "let us put off the dreaded day as long as we can. Write Mr. Carlyle at once, and say I agree to his proposition, and shall be happy to see him as soon as it may suit his convenience to come."

Mr. Temple was right when he stated that the Hartwell Farm was worth twenty per cent. more since the railroad had been built so near it; and despite its dilapidated condition, it brought a price so much larger than Mr. Hartwell had ever dreamed it was worth, that he rightly considered himself placed in easy circumstances for the rest of his life. He had wisely entrusted the investment of the money realized from the sale to Mr. Temple, whose sound common-sense and wide experience of business made him in every way worthy of the responsibility; and so all the money difficulties were suddenly cleared away, and Theodora began to feel something like her old self once more. The great trouble would be when they left the dear, old place; she dreaded it, not only for herself, but for her father. The business of selling had been transacted so quickly, and with so little knowledge of it, on his part, that he hardly realized as yet that he was no longer the owner of Hartwell Farm. Theodora would have been glad if he had seemed fully aware that the estate was actually sold, for then she felt that the final wrench of parting would not be so great; but she resolved to let nature have her way, and hoped for the best.

"Well, Theodory, I came in through the kitchen, an'

as I didn't see nobody downstairs I took the liberty to come up. Hope I don't intrude."

"Why, Charity Wygott," exclaimed Theodora, looking down from the top of a flight of steps on which she was perched, dusting the cornices of the curtains in the "red room," "how glad I am to see you! Do sit down somewhere, if you can find an empty chair. I began to think you had quite deserted me; where have you been this ever so long?"

"I've had company; my brother an' three of his children came down on me without a word o' warning, and I've had my hands full, I can tell you. But what upon earth are you doin' to this room? I didn't s'pose you'd think of house-cleanin' before the first of next month; and then I had a kind o' notion I'd drop in for a few days and lend a hand."

"Just like you to think of it," replied Theodora, seating herself on the top step of the ladder; "but I hired an excellent woman from the village to help Sarah with the scrubbing, and I really have got along splendidly. I only intended to do father's room, the dining-room, and library. I am getting this room ready for my summer boarder."

"Your summer boarder!" exclaimed Charity, looking up at Theodora, as usual, over the tops of her glasses; "what in the world are you talking about?"

"Why, didn't you know I was to have a boarder? I am — honest — a gentleman too."

"Now, Theodora Hartwell, you know I hate mysteries; so if you *have* got anything to communicate, the sooner you out with it the better. For my part I don't believe it's a boarder. I'll bet anything it's one o' them city sprigs you captivated with your Ingy. Now, confess, and don't beat round the bush any more."

"It's nothing of the kind," laughed Theodora, flour-

ishing her duster; "there isn't one of those city sprigs, as you choose to call my *gentlemen* friends, who would take the trouble to come and see me. No, I assure you he's quite a different person,—a gentleman from the West, with whom I've corresponded for some little time."

"Corresponded!" repeated Charity; "then I *know* there's something in it; for you're not the kind of girl to correspond with a man unless your intentions was serious. Now I'm not a bit curious, not a bit; but as I've said before, I hate mysteries, so if you'll please explain, I'll be obliged to you."

Theodora still sat on the top of the step, waving the duster over her head, and looking very mischievous. She had dreaded to tell Charity that the farm was sold, for she knew she would feel dreadfully; and if she could do it under the cover of a joke, it would be much easier for both of them. "Well," she said, "I don't see what use there is for me to tell you anything; you won't believe me. It's the honest truth, though; he is a gentleman from the West, and he is going to board here this summer."

"Well, what is he like? How old is he? Where'd you meet him?"

"I don't know what he is like; I don't know how old he is; and I've never met him."

"Then how, in the name of creation, did you happen to correspond with him?"

"Perhaps you'll think it strange," Theodora replied demurely, and at the same time with rather a hesitating manner; "I don't see now how I ever had the courage to do it, but—I answered an advertisement he put in the newspaper."

"Answered an advertisement!" cried Charity, fairly springing to her feet in surprise. "I never, never would have believed it; you are the last girl I should have ex-

pected such a thing from. You must excuse me, Theodory, but I am disappointed in you. If any one had told me that you'd 'a answered one o' them advertisements for correspondences I'd have told 'em they lied."

"And so you might," replied Theodora, affecting the most innocent surprise. "I never did such a thing in my life! Mr. Carlyle wrote an advertisement for a farm, and I answered it, offering ours. There! now the secret is out."

"What secret? I don't know what you mean," exclaimed Charity, somewhat testily; "come to the point now, and have done with your nonsense!"

"Well," answered Theodora, speaking very fast, as if to have it over with as soon as possible, "the Hartwell Farm is sold to a gentleman from the West; he doesn't wish to take possession of the house until next autumn, so meanwhile we remain, and he boards with us."

"Sold! The Hartwell Farm sold!" repeated Charity, slowly, as if she could hardly believe her senses; "I can't understand it. Surely, Theodory, you wouldn't joke on such a subject as that; it can't be true."

"But it is," answered Theodora, forcing a smile, determined that she would not allow herself to break down; "we had to sell it, Charity. It was no use to struggle on any longer. It has brought far more than we dreamed it was worth, so that we are really very well off. If it were not for leaving the dear, old home, I should feel that I had nothing to trouble me now."

"But I can't take it in," said Charity, as she came up and stood beside Theodora; "I can't realize it. Why, I never could imagine any one but a Hartwell living here. My great-grandfather was one of the carpenters that set up the frame of the house; I feel almost as proud of the place as you do. And your father,—I heard how

badly he felt when the old oak fell,— I shouldn't think he could bear to part with it."

"It is hard, very hard for him, but he knew it was for the best; and this arrangement, by which we stay another summer, will put off the parting a little while, and meanwhile I am determined not to borrow trouble."

"That's right, that's right; you've had trouble enough without borrowin' any, and you've borne it beautifully. You deserve to live here all your life as a reward."

"Let's not talk any more about it," said Theodora, smiling at Charity through the tears that would force themselves to her eyelids. "I haven't any time for such weakness. Just look at this room! Mr. Carlyle may be here any minute, and I haven't made the bed yet, and am not in a respectable condition to receive him."

"Don't you trouble yourself about this room; you go and dress yourself, and I'll set things to rights here before you can say Jack Robinson. I think your Mr. Carlyle, if that's his name, will find himself in pretty comfortable quarters."

"I hope he'll think so, I'm sure," replied Theodora; "you see I have no idea what his tastes are, so I have had to be guided by father's. Now I shouldn't want a fire in my chamber to-day, for it is really quite mild out; but I dare say he'll like it; perhaps he's gouty,— who knows? I had the large arm-chair out of the parlor brought up here, and I've done my best to make everything as comfortable as possible. I know old bachelors are apt to be fussy, and if there is anything I've forgotten, I hope he'll make his wants known."

"Let a man alone for that," replied Charity, as she shook and pounded the mattresses vigorously. "I shouldn't worry myself about him, but just take things easy for the rest of the summer. Now you run off and dress yourself."

Thanking Charity for her kindness, Theodora repaired to her own chamber, and was soon engaged with her simple toilet. As she stood in front of the glass, brushing out her long wavy hair, she suddenly recalled the funny adventure she had had the afternoon she went scrambling about the rocks at Scranton, with it all hanging down her back. She almost laughed aloud as she remembered the absurdity of the situation; but she grew serious when she thought of the many changes which had occurred within the six months that had passed since then. Six months! they seemed six years to her as she looked back upon them. The Theodora Hartwell who, in her mind's eye, she saw resenting the offers of assistance from "the solitary horseman," was a very different person from the girl who now looked at her out of the mirror. She thought to herself, as she pushed the hair away from her face, that she looked years older than when she took life so gayly at Scranton, and, as she thought of it, it suddenly occurred to her that it was her birthday; she was twenty. Twenty! She could hardly believe it; so many things had occupied her time and attention that the fact had entirely slipped her mind. "How very old it seems!" she said, half aloud,—"out of my teens forever. I wonder if I appear so old to other people. I remember, last summer, Mr. Lee thought I seemed about twelve, with my long braids and my short dress. How I shocked him the morning I ran on the beach with Harry Dalton! Ah, well, it was ridiculously foolish and childish; but I don't think he'd be shocked if he should see me now."

No, I do not think he, or any one else, could have been shocked if they had seen Theodora, as, her toilet completed, she sat, with her head leaning on her hand, lost in thought. Hers was a very, very young face; indeed, it was of that type which rarely ever loses all the

look it wore even in early childhood ; perhaps its color was not as bright or its outlines as rounded as formerly, but there was a deeper loveliness about it, it had never worn in the days of its fresher beauty ; an expression rarely seen in the face of one so young, and never except in those who have met sorrow face to face ; have looked upon disappointment with unflinching eyes, and who have had burdens laid upon them almost too heavy for them to bear, but have carried them with unwavering patience to the end. Her lovely hair, which had more than once been the means of getting her into disgrace, was brushed loosely away from her face and gathered quite high at the back of her head in a great coil,—a style which Theodora had assumed, thinking it gave her a more womanly, dignified air ; but the loose locks would stray here and there, and twist themselves into soft little curls, as if rebelling against the new order of things, and asserting their own independence. Her dress of deep mourning harmonized well with the serious expression of her face, while it gave a womanliness to her general appearance inexpressibly attractive in one so young. As she sat by the window in the soft afternoon light, she formed such a picture as rests the eyes with its quiet grace and beauty ; not dazzles them by boldness of outline or brilliancy of color.

Theodora was roused from her reverie by the appearance of Charity, who came rushing into the room, exclaiming, “The room is all ready, and as sure’s you’re alive Mr. Carlyle’s just come ! I saw him drive up with Joe.”

“Oh, dear !” exclaimed Theodora, “how I dread meeting him ! I wish it was over. What does he look like ?”

“Couldn’t say, to save my life ; I only just caught a glimpse of the crown of his hat. But, pshaw ! you needn’t mind him a bit ; ’taint as though he was a young man. I’ll slip down the back way ; good-by. O Theodory, I for-

got all about it, but here's a little keepsake I made for you ; 'taint much, but I remembered you was twenty to-day. Don't stop to thank me, for I haint got time to listen."

Off she ran, leaving a very pretty pincushion in Theodora's hand. Smiling to herself as she placed it on the bureau, Theodora ran downstairs without giving herself time to think what she should say, and the next moment stood in the presence of the new owner of the Hartwell Farm.

CHAPTER XX.

A SURPRISE.

As Theodora entered the sitting-room Mr. Carlyle was standing at one of the front windows, looking out on the lawn. There was something in his general appearance which at the first glance struck her with surprise. She had unconsciously formed some idea of what he would be like, and had fancied him as rather short and stout; but the person who now stood unconscious of her presence, his figure clearly defined against the light from the large window, was very tall, and anything but stout. She had only time for a hasty survey of his person, for as she advanced farther into the room he turned suddenly and, seeing her, politely bowed.

Theodora could hardly suppress an expression of astonishment as she saw his face; it was no middle-aged man who stood before her, but one who certainly could be but a few years past thirty. For an instant Theodora was so completely taken off her guard that she could not think of a thing to say, but stood, confused and embarrassed, in the centre of the room.

Mr. Carlyle came towards her, and extended his hand, saying, as he did so, "I presume I speak to Miss Hartwell, Mr. Hartwell's *daughter*."

"Yes," replied Theodora, wondering why he laid such stress on the daughter, and hardly looking him in the face. "My father was not sure when you would arrive;

he has gone for a long walk ; he will regret exceedingly that he was not here to receive you himself."

"Don't mention it, I beg of you. I should have been sorry to have had him remain at home on my account."

"Will you be seated, sir?" asked Theodora, in a constrained, formal tone, "or would you prefer to go at once to your room?"

"Thank you; if convenient, I think I will go to my room."

Mr. Carlyle took up his travelling-bag and followed Theodora, as she led the way to the "red room." As she threw open the door and stepped back for him to enter, she could not but be pleased at the expression of satisfaction which passed over his face, a face which, save when he smiled, wore a resolute, determined expression amounting almost to sternness. "How pleasant!" he exclaimed; "it looks so comfortable and home-like. I am afraid Miss Hartwell has inconvenienced some other member of the family by giving me such a great room."

"Not at all," replied Theodora; "I am very glad you like it."

As she went downstairs to the sitting-room again, she exclaimed to herself, "I never knew anything so strange in my life! I was so completely surprised that I didn't know what to say. How stupid in me to appear so embarrassed! If anything would have aroused his suspicions my manner would certainly have done it. A gentleman of 'the old school'! Well, he is a gentleman, there is no doubt of that; but what *will* father say when he sees him? But, after all, he doesn't seem like other men of his age; his manners are so formal. How strange in him to speak to me in the third person, just as if I hadn't been standing there myself! I wonder what Kate will say when I write her about it. She always thought I exceeded any one else for having remarkable adventures,

but I guess she will think I never had one yet that equalled this. I cannot get over it."

While she was thus giving vent to her feelings, her father came in from his walk. "I hear that Mr. Carlyle has arrived," he remarked. "I met Joe going down to the village for his trunk. Have you seen him, Theodora?"

"Yes, sir; he has gone up to his room. But, father, you will be so surprised. He isn't old at all; on the contrary, quite a young man,—not much over thirty certainly."

"What, so young as that! I am surprised, I must say. But do you like his appearance? Describe him."

"He is very tall, and has a fine, powerful figure,—one that when once seen would never be forgotten. He has brown hair, blue eyes,—that is, I should say they were blue,—a straight nose, and a *very* firm and decided chin; his mouth is almost entirely covered by a long mustache a little lighter than his hair."

"Well, Theodora, you seem to have taken him in thoroughly; one would think, to hear you describe him, that you had seen him before. However, I am very glad you told me about him; his age is nothing against him, but I should not have liked to have appeared surprised when I saw him, and I am very much afraid I should have."

Before Theodora could reply Mr. Carlyle's step was heard in the hall, and the next moment he entered the room. Theodora had somewhat dreaded the first meeting between him and her father; she had feared that, as the future owner of Hartwell Farm, Mr. Hartwell would not be able to greet him without some slight appearance of constraint; but she saw at a glance that her fears were unnecessary. He received Mr. Carlyle with dignified courtesy, and in a few but cordial words made him welcome to his home. No allusion whatever was made to

the sale, or the agreement which had grown out of it, and the two gentlemen fell into easy conversation, while Theodora sat apart and watched them. As she looked at Mr. Carlyle she could not but be convinced that under his management the Hartwell Farm would not long remain in its present dilapidated condition. Indeed, no one could have scrutinized those features, have remarked the resolute mould of the chin, and the clear, unflinching expression in the eyes, without being convinced that they belonged to a man who accomplished whatever work he undertook.

She was so absorbed in watching him as he talked with her father that she paid no particular attention to what they were saying until he suddenly remarked, "I understood that Miss Hartwell resided with you, sir. Shall I have the pleasure of seeing her this evening?"

"Miss Hartwell, oh, yes," replied Mr. Hartwell, with a smile; "this is the young lady."

"I meant the elder Miss Hartwell," replied Mr. Carlyle, slightly bowing to Theodora as her father alluded to her; "I presumed she was your sister, sir."

Theodora and her father exchanged glances of surprise. "I think I hardly understand you," remarked the latter; "I have no sister."

"I referred to the Miss Hartwell with whom I had the pleasure of a short correspondence;" looking first at Theodora and then at her father. "I inferred from her letters that she was a maiden lady, — probably your sister and house-keeper."

For the first time in months Mr. Hartwell fairly laughed aloud; as for Theodora she would have been glad if the floor had kindly opened and taken her in. In an instant it occurred to her how the mistake had been made; for the sake of formality, and because she thought it would appear more business-like, she had never alluded

to her father in her letters to Mr. Carlyle, *as* her father, but always as Mr. Hartwell. She had always written as briefly and concisely as possible, often thinking, as she did so, how very unlike herself her letters sounded; and it was that very briefness which had probably led Mr. Carlyle to suppose that they came from a much older person. But Mr. Hartwell soon recovered himself, and turning to Mr. Carlyle remarked, "I must seem unpardonably rude; but my daughter is the only Miss Hartwell of whose existence I am aware, and *she* is the maiden lady with whom you have corresponded."

Mr. Carlyle turned to Theodora, and made a profound bow. "I must consider this as a formal introduction," he said; "for I never imagined when I met you that you were the Miss Hartwell who answered my advertisement. I was never more surprised in my life."

"Well, well," laughed Mr. Hartwell, entirely oblivious of Theodora's embarrassment, "the surprise was not all on your side, I assure you, for she had formed about the same opinion of you that you had of her. She expected to see a short, stout, middle-aged man, quite unlike yourself."

"Then that accounts for the look of surprise with which she at first regarded me," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I confess I am glad to have it explained, for I fancied my letter had miscarried, and that I was not expected so soon."

Theodora was thankful that he had thus construed any amazement which she had been unable to conceal, and, making some only half-intelligible remark about seeing that supper was prepared, she hurried out of the room.

Six weeks passed and the first of June found Mr. Carlyle as much at home at Hartwell Farm as though he had lived there for years. Theodora found herself lost in astonishment when she considered how completely he

had adapted himself to the habits and customs of the household, and how thoroughly he seemed like one of the family. From the moment of their first meeting he and Mr. Hartwell had suited each other. Mr. Carlyle was as practical and matter-of-fact in his views as Mr. Hartwell was visionary and ideal in his, and yet the two would talk for hours as amicably as though they entertained the same opinions. Mr. Carlyle had gone to work with a will, renovating the farm in every possible way. He had a judicious head farmer, a New England man, with whom he consulted as to every improvement he made but nothing was done without his own personal supervision. Theodora had feared that it would be very hard for her father to see so many innovations on the land he had owned all his life; but, on the contrary, he discussed every fresh improvement with Mr. Carlyle with as much enthusiasm as though it had been part of the system which he himself had carried on; and, while he might shake his head at the new order of things, he manifested the liveliest interest in the result. Theodora sometimes feared that his habit of giving his opinion on every step taken, as though the farm still belonged to him, might be offensive to Mr. Carlyle, and more than once had she looked up hastily at some remark of her father's, which, by some men, might readily have been construed into interference. Her glance was always met by one from Mr. Carlyle which seemed to assure her that he understood both her feelings and her father's temperament, and knew that the habits of a lifetime could not be broken up in a few years. In all his conversations with Mr. Hartwell in regard to the farm, he delicately refrained from alluding to it as his own, but always spoke of it by its old, familiar name. Mr. Carlyle had all a woman's tact, combined with a true respect for the opinions and feelings of others, and an entire abnegation of self, which ren-

dered him peculiarly adapted to form an agreeable companion for a man of Mr. Hartwell's age and disposition. But while Theodora acknowledged to herself that he seemed like one of the family, it was entirely in his relations with her father and brothers, — not herself. With the boys he was on the best of terms ; he entered into all their pursuits, made himself acquainted with their various tastes and characteristics, and, while he never lost a jot of his native dignity, was as free and frank with them as though of their own age. His influence over Dick was already beginning to show itself in the more manly bearing and more quiet behavior of that somewhat obstreperous young gentleman.

But notwithstanding the perfect harmony which existed between him and the rest of the family, he and Theodora were, to all appearances, as entire strangers as at the moment of their first meeting. They sat at the same table day after day ; they spent most of their evenings in the same room, and yet they had never exchanged a half-hour's conversation. Despite Mr. Carlyle's various friendly advances and habitual courteous bearing, Theodora treated him with a degree of formality bordering on coldness. Why she did so would have been a difficult question for her to answer, for the embarrassment which she experienced at their first interview had entirely worn off ; but it was succeeded by a secret feeling of antagonism impossible to analyze. It irritated her to be forced to confess that the present happy, comfortable state of things was in a great measure due to him ; that his society, his intelligent, sensible conversation, had done more to rouse her father from the state of apathy into which he had fallen than she had thought anything ever could do. But notwithstanding the slight social intercourse between Mr. Carlyle and herself, there existed a tacit understanding between them in regard to her father. No allusion had

ever been made in any way to any of Mr. Hartwell's peculiarities, but Mr. Carlyle's ready interpretation of the anxious glances which she had at first so often turned on him; his adroitness in changing the conversation when he found, by the expression of her face, that he was treading upon one of the cherished prejudices of her father; the numberless interchange of intelligent looks, were forming a bond of sympathy between them strong enough to overpower all petty whims or the antagonistic feelings which she had encouraged.

CHAPTER XXI.

UNEXPECTED TIDINGS.

"HERE'S two letters for you, Theodora," said Dick Hartwell, one morning, going into the dining-room, where his sister was arranging some flowers, and handing them to her instead of throwing them through the open door, as had usually been his custom; adding, as he left the room, "They're both mailed at Boston."

Theodora held both the letters in her hand, examining the addresses; one was from her cousin Kate, but the handwriting of the other was entirely new to her; it appeared to be that of a man, although the envelope was of diminutive proportions, the paper of a delicate rose tint, and gave out a faint odor of violets. She laid it down, saying to herself, "I must read Kate's first, whoever the other is from, for I haven't heard from her for an age."

"BOSTON, July 1, 187-.

"MY DARLING THEODORA: — I know you will think me a heathen, indeed, I don't blame you, for not answering your dear long letter received nearly two months ago. It was so exactly like your old self, so droll and original from beginning to end, that I intended to have sat down and scribbled you an answer forthwith. But away with excuses! I didn't do anything of the kind, and I won't waste my time or paper in useless apologies.

"Well, Dody, you were right; I never *did* know such a young woman as you are for wonderful adventures, and your last puts all the others completely in the shade. I read your account of that meeting over and over again, before I could fairly take it in. I don't wonder you were surprised, and cannot imagine how you kept from betraying yourself when you beheld your summer boarder. A 'nice middle-aged gentleman' *your Mr. Carlyle* must be, and what an inter-

esting position for you to hold,—that of his landlady! I read your letter to Marion Drayton, and I wish you could have heard her laugh; but she says she will trust you for maintaining all the dignity the situation requires. I am glad to hear that your hair is arranged in a classical coil; it would be well for you to keep it in order, for it may yet get you into another scrape which will exceed that memorable adventure with the ‘solitary horseman.’

“Now, my dear, I have been the very essence of unselfishness, for, to tell the truth, I have been dying to talk about myself. I have a very remarkable piece of news to tell you,—I am engaged to Thurston Lee! There! now drop your letter and hold up both hands and look duly astonished, or I’ll never forgive you. It comes out to-morrow, but I was determined you should hear of it first. Of course you are wild to know how it all came about; how I quitted my *evil ways* at Scranton and became a rational being. I must be serious now, dear, and believe me when I tell you that the little lecture I had from you about Frank Dale was not without its effect. I confess that up to that time I had fully determined to marry him. I knew exactly what kind of a man he was. I did not try to flatter myself that I should be able to reform him, I knew perfectly well that such a thing would be utterly impossible; but I *did* flatter myself that I should be able to satisfy myself with the wealth and social distinction which a marriage with him would bring me. I do not think I knew then how much I really loved Thurston, I only felt that the possibility of loving him was very great; and I wished to overcome it before it grew so strong as to prevent me from marrying Mr. Dale; but your words roused feelings in my heart which I thought I had succeeded in conquering, and they would not be quieted. I determined to put an end to my intimacy with Frank Dale before he went so far as to offer himself; but all my endeavors to avoid him, to show him that his attentions were no longer agreeable, were entirely useless; nothing would satisfy him but a point-blank refusal. I think I was actuated by unselfish motives in declining his offer; indeed, I am *sure* that I did not think it would be the means of drawing Thurston to me, for I felt confident that, after he had seen me openly encourage such a man as Frank Dale, he could never again respect, far less love me. I avoided him as much as possible after our return to the city, and, although we met at parties quite often during the winter, we rarely exchanged anything but the most formal greetings; it was not until last March that anything like the old, frank intercourse was established between us. I met him one day at Dall and Richards, and congratulated him on the success of his book. I *was* proud of it, very proud, and I think I must have seemed so. I don’t think my remarks were very brilliant; I’m sure I don’t know what they were, but they seemed to satisfy him, and the result was, that for the first time in months he walked home with me. Well, dear, matters progressed finely after that, and one reason why I haven’t written you all this time was because I was afraid I might betray my

feelings, if I sat down for a good, long chat with you. To make a very long story short, it was all settled last Class Day,—you know Thurston graduated at Harvard in '63,—I don't know exactly how myself: I have a confused idea of Chinese lanterns, illuminated buildings, and a band, followed by a long walk through the most retired, darkest part of the college grounds, and then — Ah! Theodora, there I shall have to draw the curtain; it was a short drama, but I assure you it was very satisfactory to the actors. I made a full confession to Thurston, and tried to convince him that I should never have come to my senses if it had not been for you; but he is very persistent, and insists that I should have seen the error of my ways before it was too late. Nevertheless, I assure you he entertains the same unbounded admiration for that 'delightfully unsophisticated' cousin of mine as when he first saw her, and if he were here, I know he would send some *cousinly* messages.

"Papa is in a radiant state, bordering on foolishness. I tell him it is not very complimentary to me for him to be so delighted at the prospect of losing me; but he always did admire Thurston, and says he is a son-in-law after his own heart. You see I have been making up for lost time by the length of this letter; I have wasted about half a quire of my best paper on you; but I won't bother you another moment, so good by,

"From your radiantly happy but undeserving cousin,

"KATE."

Theodora did not drop the letter and hold up her hands as she read Kate's startling announcement; she continued to the end, smiling to herself and looking quite as pleased and surprised as her cousin could possibly have expected. "I am so glad!" she said to herself as she re-read certain parts of the letter; "so very, very glad. It is the best piece of news I could possibly have had. Mr. Lee will make a splendid woman of Kate, and I know she will be thoroughly happy as his wife. At last one of my pet dreams is realized."

She was so absorbed with her pleasant reflections that she entirely forgot the other letter lying in her lap, until, as she sprang up to attend to her neglected flowers, it fell on the floor at her feet. "Oh, my other letter!" she exclaimed. "I entirely forgot it." As she stooped to pick it up, the monogram, which had before escaped

her notice, attracted her attention. "S. S.," she said to herself, as she deciphered the elaborate combination of letters, — "S. S., who in the world can that be? I don't know of but one person who has those initials, and he wouldn't be so foolish as to — no, it can't be he!"

She tore open the envelope and hastily glanced at the signature; the instant it met her eye she gave a little gasp, and sank down in a chair with a dazed, almost frightened expression on her face. She held the letter in her hand for some time without reading it; she seemed to have a vague, undefined feeling of dread in regard to its contents which she could not bear to have confirmed. At last she took it up and read it to the end. Her fears were verified; it was a plain, straightforward offer of marriage from Smythe Simperton. As Theodora read it she entertained more respect for him than she had ever been able to feel in the days of their acquaintance at Scranton. She would have been almost glad if there had been anything in it suggestive of his former foppish, conceited manner; then she would have felt that it would not be so hard to write to him the answer she must send; but all that was best and noblest in the man had been called forth by the love which Theodora acknowledged was as true and sincere as any woman could ever wish to receive. He told her, in a few, simple words, how surprised he had been when he found that, for the first time in his life, he really loved; he said that he knew he was unworthy to be her husband, but that his love for her was so great, its influence over him had already been so powerful for good, that he was confident, if she could but consent to become his wife, she could make him what she would.

As Theodora finished reading his letter, and realized how entirely another's happiness lay in her hands, she felt more thoroughly wretched and miserable than she

had ever been in her life. Not once did she entertain the slightest feeling of triumph, that a man who had been an habitu  of fashionable society for years, had made it his boast that he had never been captivated by any woman, had laid his heart at her feet; not once did the thought of the wealth, the life of perfect luxury which would be hers, if she should marry Smythe Simperton, occur to her. She was beset by no temptation to yield to his wishes, from any worldly motives; he had put the question to her plainly, "Could she love him well enough to become his wife?" and for her there was but one answer to make — and that was, no.

She felt that she must not keep him in unnecessary suspense; so at once went to her own room, where she would be free from interruptions, determined not to leave it until she had succeeded in writing her answer. She strove to make it as kind and considerate as possible, while at the same time it precluded all possibility of hope for any change in her feelings. As she wrote her name at the bottom of the page, she felt as if she were signing a death-warrant, and would have given all she possessed in the world, if she could have entirely destroyed the affection she had been so little desirous of rousing. She sat a long time, hardly knowing where she was until the dinner-bell recalled her to herself. Hurriedly thrusting both Mr. Simperton's letter and her answer in a drawer, she went downstairs with a heavy heart.

"Well, Theodora, what is the news from Boston?" asked Mr. Hartwell, as the family took their seats at the table; "I hear you had two letters from there."

"She doesn't look as though they pleased her very much," remarked Frank, in his quiet way; "I don't believe they were very interesting. Say, Dode, who was that pink thing from?"

"Kate wrote me a very startling piece of news," said

Theodora, not appearing to notice Frank's last question, — "she is engaged."

"To one of your beaux, I'll bet!" cried Dick; "that's the reason you look so glum."

"The gentleman *is* one of my friends, — a man I admire extremely," replied Theodora; "the very one I hoped Kate would marry, — Mr. Thurston Lee, of Boston."

"Is he any one whom your uncle knows?" asked Mr. Hartwell. "Is he pleased?"

"As Kate expresses it, he is in a radiant state bordering on foolishness. And I know he can't help being pleased, for Mr. Lee is one of the finest men I ever knew."

"But, Dode, you don't tell who your other letter was from," said Dick, — "that one in the pink envelope, all perfumed and filligreed. I should have thought it was from a lady if it hadn't been for the handwriting; but that was a man's."

Theodora colored painfully, but answered, "It was from a gentleman I met at Scranton."

"Were you ever at Scranton, Miss Theodora?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

"Yes," replied Theodora, concisely. "Father, can I help you to anything?"

"No, I thank you. Mr. Carlyle you speak of Scranton as if the name were familiar to you; were you ever there?"

"Not to stay any length of time. I spent last summer very near there, and used to ride over to the beach frequently."

"I am surprised you did not see Theodora; she was there last summer, and, from all accounts spent most of her time on the beach."

"I only rode there for the sake of the fine sea-view,"

replied Mr. Carlyle. "As you know, I am not much of a society man, so never eared to go to the beach at the fashionable hours; still it is quite possible that I did see Miss Theodora, for ever since I have been here, she has reminded me of some one I have seen before, but whom, I cannot imagine."

"I can tell you what," exclaimed Dick, "I don't believe you ever did see her; for if she'd met you in Jericho she'd know you the next time she saw you; she never forgets a face, — do you, Dode?"

"No," replied Theodora, then suddenly changing the subject of conversation, she said, "I am going to the village this afternoon, does any one want anything?"

"I do, Miss Theodora," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I want you to let me drive you down in my new buggy, which arrived this morning. Now, don't refuse me, as you always have, or I shall take it as a personal slight."

"She is a goose, if she does!" broke out Dick. "I tell you, Dody, it's a stunning team, and I rather flattered myself that I should be the first to ride in it."

"You reckoned without your host," laughed Mr. Carlyle. "Miss Theodora, silence gives consent; what time do you wish to go?"

As Mr. Carlyle had said, Theodora had invariably declined his numerous invitations to ride with him, always having some plausible reason for remaining at home; but to-day, almost before she was aware of it, she found herself agreeing to the arrangement and setting the hour for them to start.

Late in the afternoon, as they returned from their drive, which had been extended far beyond the village, when Mr. Carlyle assisted Theodora from the carriage, he interrupted her thanks by saying, "It is I who

have to thank you for a delightful afternoon. I accept it as a good omen that the prejudice with which you at first regarded me is gradually wearing away; I hope before long it will entirely disappear."

He spoke quite seriously, and Theodora hardly knew what to say, for she had never imagined from his manner that he had noticed her formality and coldness: while she hesitated Ralph came running up, and begged to be allowed to ride to the barn in the new buggy, and as Mr. Carlyle caught the boy up and seated him in it, she took advantage of the interruption to go into the house without making any reply.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. CARLYLE'S HISTORY.

"THEODORA, shut up that book; you are trying your eyes. It is not light enough for you to see to read; besides, you are losing this lovely evening."

"In one moment, father. I am right in the middle of a very interesting chapter; I'll stop the minute I finish it."

The family were on the porch, where they spent all their summer evenings, and Theodora was seated on the top step, leaning forward to catch the last of the fading light, completely absorbed in her book. As she finished the chapter and closed the volume, Mr. Carlyle asked, "What are you reading, Miss Theodora, that interests you so much?"

"It is an old novel I found in the garret, — 'Felix Urquhart,' — did you ever read it?"

"I'll bet he never did!" exclaimed Dick, contemptuously. "'Felix Urquhart,' — the name is enough for me! The man who had such a name as that must be a flat."

"Dick, I don't see where you get such horrible slang," replied Theodora. "A *flat*! indeed, I can assure you he was nothing of the kind, and as for his name I think it is perfectly grand."

"Perfectly grand!" repeated Dick, in a tone of disgust, — "Felix Urquhart a grand name! Urquhart is bad enough, but Felix is worse, — a regular,

high-flown novel name, and belongs to a spooney, I'll be bound."

"That shows just how much you know about it," replied Theodora. "Felix is one of the most beautiful names in the English language, and I only wish we ever used it here in America. I used to think I liked Max just as well; but I don't now. I prefer a name that has some significance to it, and what could be more beautiful than that of Felix?"

"Why, Theodora, I really did not know you had so much romance in you," said Mr. Hartwell, with a smile; "I should have said you would prefer a plain, straightforward John, or James, or Joseph."

"Or Aminadab, or Josiah, or Abijah!" laughed Theodora. "No, father, I confess to the romance, and if any one should ask me, 'What's in a name?' I should reply at once, a great deal."

"But a person is not responsible for his or her name," remarked Mr. Carlyle, who had seemed very much amused at the conversation, although he had not taken any part in it; sometimes a very fine one may be given a person whose characteristics by no means accord with its significance."

"I know all that," replied Theodora, with a smile; "but exceptions prove the rule, you know. At any rate, I shall cling to my Felix; I know I couldn't help admiring a man with that name."

"Well, Theodora, you haven't got as much sense as I gave you credit for!" exclaimed Dick. "You'd better go on a pilgrimage after your high-flown hero, and when you find him play Felicitas to his Felix. Come on, boys! This is just the night to catch glow-worms; I see a lot now down in the meadow."

"Miss Theodora," said Mr. Carlyle, as the boys

rushed away, "you said you liked the name of Max; have you ever read 'A Life for a Life'?"

"No, I don't think I ever have; is it anything new?"

"Oh, no; I spoke of it because the hero is named Max, — a grand fellow; quite after your heart, I should say."

"Who is it by? I shall certainly have to get it."

"Miss Mulock. I have it, and should be most happy to lend it to you."

"Thank you, I shall be only too glad to borrow it. I only wish the man was named Felix."

"What made me think of him particularly, was the fact of his being named Urquhart too," replied Mr. Carlyle.

"Max Urquhart!" exclaimed Theodora; "what a singular coincidence! Oh, I know I shall like him, now; if he is anything like my Felix Urquhart he must be almost perfect."

"Mr. Carlyle," began Mr. Hartwell, in his slow, musing way, "you surprise me daily by showing a new side of a character which I flattered myself I already understood."

"How so, Mr. Hartwell? I was not aware that I had a great many peculiarities."

"Not peculiarities, but traits. The two words, although often used to express the same ideas, really have a very different meaning. For instance, when I first became acquainted with you, and saw you take hold of this place in such a resolute, go-ahead way, and heard your matter-of-fact, common-sense style of conversation — My frankness does not offend you?"

"Not at all, not at all; on the contrary, it gratifies me," replied Mr. Carlyle.

"Well, as I say, when I saw how thoroughly practical

you were in all your views, I fancied you were one who cared only for the mere business of life; that you only read the prose, not the poetry, of nature. But every day, as I became more thoroughly acquainted with you, and you began to feel yourself more at home here,—for it is only when a man *does* feel at home that his true character shows itself,—I learned my mistake. It was a perfect revelation to me when I discovered your fondness for and skill in music; your love for flowers; works of art, etc.; and you are the last man whom I should have thought would have taken any interest in works of fiction.”

Mr. Carlyle smiled. “I am not surprised that you took such a view of my character,” he said. “I have, I think, more than the usual amount of imagination in my composition; but circumstances have been such as to force me to repress, rather than encourage it. I know that the habitual expression of my face is stern and hard; but perhaps you will not wonder at that when I give you a synopsis of my past life. Mr. Hartwell, I cannot express to you the gratitude I feel towards you, when I consider how you have made me, an entire stranger to you a few months ago, feel as if I were one of your family. You have never asked me a word about my antecedents, but have —”

Mr. Hartwell interrupted him, saying, in a dignified but very kind tone, “Mr. Carlyle, I took you for what I found you. Whatever your antecedents may have been, *you* are a gentleman, and one whom I consider it an honor to number among my friends.”

“Thank you, Mr. Hartwell,” replied Mr. Carlyle, in a tone of real gratitude. “I know of no one from whom such words would be more pleasing. I will give you a brief sketch of my life; perhaps it may serve to explain some things which otherwise might appear strange to you. As you of course know, my name is Scotch; indeed, my

father and mother were both born in Edinburgh. My mother belonged to a very old family; her parents were as proud and aristocratic as they were wealthy. At sixteen she fell in love with the tutor of her only brother. She tried hard to overcome her affection for him, knowing only too well that her parents would never give their consent to her marriage with a person so much below her own station; but it was no use; they were constantly thrown in each other's society,—for my mother studied several branches with her brother,—and the result was that they eloped and were married. Her parents resolutely refused to see her or do anything for her support, and in a few months they both emigrated to America, where my father, after trying in vain to get a position as tutor, either in a private family or school, was obliged to become a clerk in a counting-house.

“The year after they came here I was born; my childhood must have been spent in absolute poverty, for the salary my father received was hardly enough to support us; yet, notwithstanding all their privations and trouble, my father and mother never neglected either my moral or mental education, and I owe everything I now am to their early care and training. My father's delicate constitution could not long endure the close confinement of the counting-room; he struggled on bravely as long as he could possibly crawl to the office, but was at last obliged to give up, and in a few years died of consumption. After that, until I was fifteen, my mother, who had been brought up in the lap of luxury, without even the knowledge of work or care of any kind, was obliged to support both herself and me by her needle. I shudder when I think of the privations she must have endured; but I will not speak of them again. The firm with whom my father had been, manifested some interest in our fate, and although my mother's pride would not allow her to receive direct

pecuniary aid from them, they were instrumental in finding her work, and when I was fifteen procured me a situation in a large commercial house in C——. My mother removed there with me, and the desire to earn money enough to place her above want and care became the one aim of my life. I worked early and late; I almost wonder that my health did not give way under the immense strain I put upon body and mind; but I was young, and, thank God, blessed with a vigorous constitution, with which hard work seemed to agree. The only relaxation I allowed myself was music. I never shall forget the day when my mother and I first allowed ourselves the extravagance of a hired piano. In her girlhood she had had a beautiful voice, and although it was very much weakened, no music in the world ever seemed so sweet to me as the old Scotch ballads when she sung them.

“Mr. Hartwell, if I tire you, don’t hesitate to say so; you are the first person to whom I ever disclosed my history, or opened my heart; I did not know when I began what a relief it was to one to speak.”

“Do not cease, I beg of you,” replied Mr. Hartwell. “I assure you that in me you find both an interested and sympathizing listener.”

“Of the latter I felt sure; but I have little more to say. I prospered in business, and five years ago became junior partner in the firm I had entered twelve years before as a boy. I bought a house, and had the satisfaction of seeing my mother surrounded, if not by every luxury, certainly with all the comforts of life. But my greatest dream was not yet realized; I wished to own a large country estate, where I knew she would be happier than in a crowded city. In the early part of last year I read in a New York paper an advertisement for the whereabouts of the daughter, or heirs of the daughter, of the late Mr. Walter Carlyle, of Edinburgh. Unbeknown to

my mother, I wrote to Edinburgh, sending proofs of my mother's identity, and in return received the information that, by the sudden death of my grandfather, who, strange to say, had died without a will, she had fallen heir to all his property, both her mother and brother having died several years previous. I supposed that when my mother received the news she would wish to immediately return to Scotland; but, on the contrary, all the old ties being broken there, she could not bear to leave the country where her husband was buried. Her health, which had for some time been very delicate, began to fail rapidly, and the physicians advised her to try the sea-air. Last summer we came to New England. She admired the scenery extremely; it suited her much better than that of the West, and she desired to buy a large farm somewhere in this locality. I put an advertisement in the paper, the result of which you know—"Here Mr. Carlyle ceased speaking for a moment, then continued in a low voice: "The wealth came too late; the day on which Mr. Downs concluded the bargain for the Hartwell Farm I laid my mother in the grave."

In the silence which followed, Mr. Hartwell leaned forward and took Mr. Carlyle's hand with a firm grasp, which said far more than words. Theodora sat perfectly motionless; she had been deeply interested in Mr. Carlyle's account of his life, and the sad and unexpected ending brought the tears to her eyes. Her own recent sorrow made her realize fully how great had been his loss. When she thought what a trial it must have been to him to come alone to the place where he had hoped his mother would spend her declining years, she reproached herself for the formality and coldness with which she had treated him. She would have been glad if she could only show her sympathy in some way, but she could not speak.

Mr. Carlyle was the first to break the silence. "You

can understand, sir, how hard it would have been for me to have occupied this great house alone. Every room I entered would have mocked me with its loneliness. I thought, when I came here, that I could never be really happy again; but your kindness, the home feeling with which I have been surrounded, combined with the novelty of an active out-of-door life, have been of the greatest benefit to me, by making me forget myself."

"I almost wonder that you did not lose all interest in the place," remarked Mr. Hartwell; "indeed, I can hardly understand how you could have the heart to come here at all."

"I am not surprised that you think so," replied Mr. Carlyle; "but I am naturally fond of a country life, and although circumstances have always made it necessary for me to live in a large city, I have by no means followed my inclinations, in so doing. My connections with my old firm were entirely dissolved. I am not a man who can sit idle, no matter how much my means might appear to warrant such a course. I must have some active work, of some kind, and so it seemed to me that the best thing for me to do would be to carry on this farm, as I had intended before my mother's death."

Mr. Hartwell said nothing for some moments, then rose as if to go into the house; but as he reached the door he stood still for a moment, then said, "Mr. Carlyle, you know that this farm belonged to my father and my grandfather before me. I had fondly hoped that so long as the walls of this house remained standing, some member of my family would find their home under its roof. But it was not to be; I was obliged to give up my dream. I had to sell the place; but I tell you, honestly and sincerely, that I know of no one else I should be so glad to look upon as its owner as yourself. May you live long to enjoy it; may as many blessings,

and as few sorrows as is best for any of us to have, be your portion so long as you remain the possessor of the Hartwell Farm."

He turned and went into the house before Mr. Carlyle could answer him. Theodora rose and followed without a word; as she passed Mr. Carlyle, he noticed, in the bright moonlight, that her eyes were dimmed with tears.

"Could they have been called forth by sympathy for me, or for her own loss?" mused Mr. Carlyle, as he sat alone on the porch; "for her own loss, of course; I will not flatter myself otherwise."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THEODORA MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"SAY, Dody, won't you go with us? We're going to have a rousing good time. Mr. Carlyle has given me a fishing-pole for my ownty-donty; wasn't he good?"

"Yes, I think he was, very good. But, Ralph, where are you going, and how long do you intend to be gone?"

"All day, I s'pose, or mighty near it. We're going to ride ten or twelve miles, to a place where Dick says there is a first-rate trout-stream; we're going to make a fire, and boil coffee, and cook our fish, — if we get any."

"Very well put in," laughed Mr. Carlyle, who had entered the room in time to hear the last part of Ralph's remark. "But, Miss Theodora, why won't you go with us? Hasn't Ralph been urging you to? It's a perfect day; the ride alone ought to be sufficient inducement. You can take a book to amuse yourself with while we are fishing, if you don't care to join in the sport."

"Oh, it's quite out of the question for me to think of going," replied Theodora. "I couldn't think of leaving father alone so long; it would be forlorn for him to have to sit down to dinner without any of us."

"What is that about me?" inquired Mr. Hartwell, who had been deeply engrossed with a book. "Who wants me to go anywhere?"

"No one," laughed Theodora; "at least I don't think you have received an invitation; they are —"

"I'll tell you just what it is, father," interrupted Ralph; "we are teasing Dode to go on a trouting expedition, and she says she won't, because she doesn't want to leave you alone at dinner."

"Nonsense, Theodora!" exclaimed Mr. Hartwell; "to tell you the truth I shall be thankful to have the house to myself to-day. I have some very important writing to do, and the less noise there is the better I shall like it."

"There, Dode, you see he doesn't want you; he just the same as says your room is better than your company."

"Ralph, keep still," replied Theodora. "It is all very well for you to say you want the house quiet, father, but you know you'll be very lonesome when it comes dinner-time, if I do go."

"Don't flatter yourself, my dear, that you are of such immense importance;" at the same time patting Theodora's hand as it rested on the arm of his chair. "As for dinner, all I want is for Sarah to bring me a cup of tea and some dry toast in the library. Now run away and get ready, and have as good a time as you can."

"Hurrah!" shouted Ralph, tossing his cap in the air; "this is the first expedition this summer that Dode's been on; it will be twice as jolly."

"Now, Miss Theodora," remarked Mr. Carlyle, "you see how you have been missed."

"It is just as well I have stayed at home heretofore," she replied, with a laugh; "I shall be all the better appreciated now. Well, of course, we shall want a substantial lunch; cold chicken wouldn't come amiss, I suppose, in case the trout refuse to be caught."

"I rather think not," replied Mr. Carlyle. "I, for

one, can promise a ravenous appetite, and I guess the boys won't be very far behind me."

"Hallo, Dode,—you going?" asked Dick, as he and Frank came in with a quantity of fishing-tackle in their hands; "that's good. Give us lots of grub, we shall be hungry as bears."

"I will prepare you a most excellent luncheon," replied Theodora, primly, as she started for the kitchen to consult with Sarah; "grub I know nothing about."

About an hour afterwards the party started, provided with an immense hamper, filled with good things, a kettle to boil their coffee in, — for the boys positively rebelled against a coffee-pot as being altogether too conventional to suit their idea of camp cooking, — and rods and lines enough to catch all the trout that were ever found in American waters.

It was a perfect August day, and as they rode along through the woods Theodora could not but be glad that she had consented to join the party. As Ralph had said, it was the first one of the boys' numerous excursions which she had been on that summer; for if they had not been directly planned and instigated by Mr. Carlyle, it was owing to him that they were carried out on the present somewhat extensive scale; and as yet she had not entirely overcome the feelings she had at first entertained in regard to him. It annoyed her to think that he was constantly showering favors upon them which they ought to have been conferring upon him; even the wagon they rode in was his, as well as the horse they drove, for their own was too old to be equal to such long drives. She could not forget that, notwithstanding anything he might say to the contrary, his board was a mere nothing in comparison to the rent of the house; and to a person of her independent spirit this feeling of indebtedness was exceedingly irritating. She acknowledged that, as a

whole, the summer had been a very delightful and easy one ; for their increased means had enabled her to hire a girl to assist Sarah with the work, which would otherwise have fallen upon herself. The freedom from care and anxiety had strengthened her body as well as refreshed her mind ; but nevertheless she knew she should be thankful when the dreaded day of leaving the farm was over, and they no longer lived in a house which did not belong to them.

But the effect which Mr. Carlyle's account of his life had had on her the previous evening had not entirely worn off ; she felt more disposed to treat him with cordiality and freedom than she had ever allowed herself to do, and she determined to dismiss all unpleasant reflections and give herself up to the enjoyment of the hour. For several miles their drive lay through that portion of the farm which Theodora had gone over with Mr. Downs, and she could not help contrasting its present flourishing condition with the forlorn aspect it had then worn. The broken fences and dilapidated walls had been repaired ; the stones and stubble cleared away ; and the fields, which were then in a condition of entire neglect, had been ploughed and planted, and now presented broad, even surfaces covered with young grass, or waving grain almost ripe for the harvest. It seemed almost incredible that such wonderful improvements could have been made in so short a time, and she could not but entertain a feeling of respect for the man whose energy and perseverance had accomplished so much.

Dick's ideas as to the exact locality of the trout-stream appeared to be very vague ; but after they had ridden about fourteen miles they came to a brook, which he insisted was the right one ; so they accordingly alighted, took out the horse and fastened him under the tree, and made immediate preparations for catching their fish. Theodora thought she should enjoy watching the sport, for a while

at least, so went with the others to the banks of the stream. Mr. Carlyle's face wore rather a quizzical expression as he put his rod together, but he said nothing, and the four anglers wandered up and down the stream in search of a pool in which they could get a bite. But their efforts met with no success; they went up and down, up and down, until Theodora became disgusted and strolled off to gather ferns and mosses.

It was some time before the enthusiasm of the anglers appeared to flag, but at last Dick exclaimed, "I say, Mr. Carlyle, I think this is mighty slow work; I don't believe there is a single trout in this brook."

"I could have told you that in the first place," replied Mr. Carlyle as he reeled in his line; "but I thought it would be better to let you find it out for yourself."

"What do you mean?" asked Dick, in surprise. "Do you suppose I like trotting up and down this old bank all the morning, dangling a line over water that hasn't got any fish in it?"

"No, I don't suppose you do; I'm sure I don't. On the other hand, do you suppose that anything I could have said to the contrary would have convinced you that this was *not* a trout-brook until you had tried it yourself?"

"No, I don't suppose it would," replied Dick, frankly, pushing his hat back from his hot face. "I know I'm as stubborn as a mule, and experience is the only thing that ever could teach me."

"Well, I think it's pretty rough on us, anyhow," grumbled Frank; "I'm just about starved, and almost roasted. I think trouting's a humbug."

"So do I," put in poor little Ralph, who had manfully held out as long as the rest; "but there's one comfort,—Dode's got a lot of chicken and things in her basket; let's have lunch."

"Yes, I think we are all about ready to do it justice," said Mr. Carlyle. "But where is your sister?"

"Theodora! Theodora!" shouted Dick. "Hallo! we're going to have luncheon."

"But where are your fish?" asked Theodora, as she came from a neighboring thicket, her hands filled with ferns. "I thought you were to cook some for dinner."

"Oh, don't talk about trout, for mercy's sake," said Dick; "there aren't any in the brook. I tell you what, suppose we give up the coffee; I for one don't feel like broiling myself over a fire."

"To tell you the truth," laughed Theodora, "I had some doubts about your camp-cooking, and I took the precaution to bring a large bottle of coffee already prepared, in case yours should not come out all right."

"Theodora, you're a brick!" exclaimed Dick, with more earnestness than elegance; "just give me the bottle, and I'll put it in the brook, to get real cold, and it'll be ten times better than any stuff we'd make."

The hamper was soon opened, and all went to work with a good will to demolish its contents. It was found to contain so many things to tempt the appetite that the absence of fish was not mourned over. The cold coffee proved very acceptable, and all pronounced the feast a perfect success. When the basket was again repacked, Mr. Carlyle lighted a cigar, and stretched himself on the grass, while the boys wandered off into the woods, and Theodora amused herself arranging her ferns.

"O Miss Theodora," said Mr. Carlyle, in a few minutes, jumping up and going to the wagon, "here is the book I promised to lend you. I threw it into the wagon the last moment."

"Thanks! it could not have come at a more apt time I shall proceed at once to make Max's acquaintance."

As she put up her hand for the book it suddenly slipped

from Mr. Carlyle's fingers and fell to the ground; they both reached forward and caught hold of it at the same time. It had opened as it fell, and in the second in which they both held it between them, Theodora read on the fly-leaf, written in the bold, firm hand she knew so well, — "Felix Carlyle."

She let go of the book as if it burnt her fingers, and glanced up quickly at Mr. Carlyle, her face flushing crimson. He looked at her in amazement, then his eye fell on the open page in his hand, and in an instant he divined the cause of her sudden movement. "Miss Theodora," he began.

But she interrupted him with an impatient gesture as she sprang to her feet: "Don't say a word, I beg of you; there is no need of adding to my mortification."

"But why should you feel any mortification?" asked Mr. Carlyle, while at the same time he understood perfectly that to a girl of her sensitive pride such a discovery, after what she had said in his presence, could not be otherwise than extremely annoying. "I know perfectly well that when you so extolled the name of Felix last night, you were entirely unaware that it was my own."

"You might at least have spared me the embarrassment of making the discovery in your presence," she replied, with flashing eyes and hot cheeks. "It is but fair to myself to say that my ridiculous and sentimental raving over a mere name was an exaggeration of what I really felt, assumed more for the sake of rousing Dick's indignation than for any other reason."

"I believe you, Miss Theodora, and I also expect you to believe me when I say that I had forgotten my name was written in full in the front of this book. I rarely ever sign it with anything more than my initials, so that I am sure you could not have known what it was. I could

not help smiling last night when I heard you assigning virtues to whoever might bear the appellation of Felix, which I knew perfectly well did not belong at least to one of that name."

"Mr. Carlyle," replied Theodora, "you seem to thoroughly enjoy placing me in an awkward position in regard to yourself; this is the second time you —" She stopped suddenly and bit her lip; in her excitement she had said more than she had intended.

"Miss Hartwell," replied Mr. Carlyle, in a dignified tone, "I am unaware that I have ever intentionally placed you in an awkward position in regard to myself. I think I understand to what you allude; probably the fact of my entering a family which was presided over by so young a lady as yourself; but you must not forget that when I wrote for permission to do so, I was as unaware of your age as you were of mine. I have seen, from the first day I entered your home, that you considered your position in regard to me an unusual and embarrassing one. I respected the delicacy which led you to feel so, and have endeavored in every way to make myself as little objectionable to you as possible. I see that I have failed to do so; but it has been my misfortune, not my fault."

Theodora said nothing for some moments; she knew that every word Mr. Carlyle spoke was true, and as he stood before her, calm and dignified, but with a slight expression of reproach on his face, she could not help acknowledging to herself that he was every way worthy of the name she so much admired. There was a struggle between wounded pride and generosity going on in her heart; the latter would have conquered and forced her to openly acknowledge the kindness and delicate consideration she had invariably received from the man before her; but the remark Dick had made in Mr. Carlyle's

presence rang in her ears: "You had better go on a pilgrimage after your hero, and when you find him play Felicitas to his Felix." They froze the words on her lips; she would not make any admission which could be construed into a recognition of virtues in him which she had extolled as belonging to her ideal Felix. "I am aware, Mr. Carlyle," she said coldly, "that I, as well as the rest of my family, am very much indebted to you; but I assure you it has been no easy thing for me to receive as a favor at your hands what has for so many years been mine by right. I own it is your consideration only which has allowed us to remain in a house over which we, legally, have no longer control; but I shall do everything in my power to render our stay as short as possible."

She turned with a haughty movement of the head, and would have walked away, but he stepped before her and put out his hand with a gesture of command. He was evidently struggling to control himself; he was very pale, but his voice came even lower and slower than usual as he said, "Miss Theodora, I insist that you shall not urge your father to leave the Hartwell Farm before the time on which we agreed."

"And what right have you to insist that I shall or shall not do anything I may see fit?" asked Theodora, indignantly.

"The right which your unjust treatment of me alone gives. I ask nothing at your hands; your words prove that, towards me at least, you are incapable of entertaining a generous emotion; but for your father's sake, I repeat, I *insist* you shall do nothing to cause him to leave a place where he is evidently happier than he can ever be anywhere else."

"And I repeat, that you have no right whatever to insist upon anything of the kind," replied Theodora, hotly. "My father would never wish to remain another day in

that house, if he even suspected the annoyances to which I am subjected. I have but one thing to ask, and that is that you will immediately call the boys, and let us return home at once, and I assure you it is the last favor, however trifling, I will ever receive from you."

"Miss Theodora, you are angry now," quietly replied Mr. Carlyle. "I shall be very much mistaken in my estimate of your character, if you do not soon regret the hasty words you have just said."

"Never!" replied Theodora, emphatically, as she turned and walked towards the wagon.

The boys came at Mr. Carlyle's call, and they were all soon on their homeward drive. Happily the younger members of the party were in an extremely garrulous mood, so the silence of the older ones passed unnoticed. As they reached the porch Mr. Carlyle jumped out and offered his hand to Theodora, with his usual courtesy, to assist her to alight; but she took no notice of it whatever, and sprang past him without a word.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN EMBARRASSING MEETING.

DAYS and weeks passed, autumn had actually arrived, and yet Theodora had said nothing to her father about leaving the Hartwell Farm. She said to herself daily that Mr. Carlyle's command had nothing to do with her disinclination to do so ; that it was her own dread of suggesting a change which she knew would be so trying to him, which prevented her from saying anything about it.

Her intercourse with Mr. Carlyle since the day of the unpleasant discovery she had made in regard to his name, and which was followed by their stormy conversation, had been of a somewhat peculiar nature. She dared not treat him rudely, as she would have at first been positively glad to do, for fear of attracting the attention and comments of her father and the boys, and thus causing an explanation of their quarrel, which would have been anything but agreeable. When her anger died away, and she thought how unkind and unjust her words to Mr. Carlyle really had been, she had felt thoroughly ashamed, but she would not acknowledge that such was the fact. She wondered if he thought she refrained from forcing their departure on account of what he had said, and watched him narrowly but stealthily, to see if she could gather anything from his appearance or conversation which would enlighten her as to his opinion of her present course. But she might as well have expected a bronze statue to open its lips and answer her

questions, as for that stern, quiet face to reveal anything which its owner wished to conceal. There was no difference in his bearing towards her, other than the fact that he now never addressed her unless necessity required, then he spoke in the same courteous manner, and looked at her with the same unflinching eyes as ever. At first there had been a shade of defiance in her manner towards him, but that soon disappeared before the impenetrable calmness and dignity of his demeanor. At first she rather enjoyed being left alone in the room with him; it gave her an opportunity of showing how entirely indifferent she was to him, by appearing to utterly ignore his presence. If he chanced to enter the sitting-room when she was busy sewing, singing aloud as she worked, she continued singing in the most nonchalant manner possible; if she happened to be at the piano, she practised her scales with a persistency which would certainly have won encomiums from the most exacting of masters; but she soon abandoned this system when, upon looking up from the piano one day, where she had been playing, for about half an hour, one of the most torturing exercises she possessed, she caught sight of an amused smile on his face as he sat by the fire. She rose instantly; that smile of amusement irritated her more than a torrent of angry words could have done; it made her feel like a silly little child, whose petty attempts at annoying an elder are considered unworthy of notice. From that time she avoided being left with Mr. Carlyle for a moment, but if by chance they were thrown together, she found herself exceedingly uncomfortable. The *sang-froid* on which she had so prided herself had entirely deserted her; she found herself embarrassed, without a cause. If she looked up and met his eyes fixed upon her, as she often did, with a strangely earnest expression, her own instantly fell, and she was obliged to do something to cover

her confusion. Whenever she heard his step in the hall, her heart began to beat violently, and her fingers to tremble in a most unaccountable and annoying way.

She was provoked with herself when she noticed all these little changes in her feelings. "What does it mean?" she asked herself one day, as she sat alone in her room. "What is there about that man that he should so powerfully move me? It is his indomitable will; he will control every one who comes within his reach. I recognized that quality in him the first time I ever saw him. I rebelled against it then, and I'll rebel against it now. He *shall not* have such an influence over me; he shall learn that there is one person, at least, who defies him."

Just as she had said these words to herself, Ralph came running into the room, exclaiming, "Come, Dode, won't you go nutting with me? I haven't anything to do. Frank and Dick have gone off somewhere with father, and Mr. Carlyle's down at the village; I think you might go."

"Isn't it too early for nuts?" asked Theodora. "We haven't had any frost yet to speak of."

"I know that, but I guess we can get some walnuts; at any rate, we can have the fun of trying. I want to get some to take to Boston with us for the winter."

"But, Ralph, you've no right to take the nuts away; you forget that the place and everything on it belongs to Mr. Carlyle."

"Well, Theodora, you must think he's mighty mean if he wouldn't let me have as many nuts as I wanted. There'll be more on the place this year than he could eat if he lived here forever. Besides, you *know* he wants us boys to do just the same as we always have. What makes you feel so queer towards him? Sometimes I really believe you almost hate him."

"Hush, Ralph! You don't know what you're talking about," replied Theodora, rising and going to her closet. "I'll go with you, just for the sake of the walk. Wait a minute until I twitch the trimming off this hat; it will be more convenient than my great sundown.

While Theodora was speaking she had opened a band-box and taken out her sailor hat, which she had not had on since the previous summer, and proceeded to take off the long velvet streamers and little aigrette of bright feathers. It was soon done, and, tying a plain black ribbon round the crown, she put it on, and declared herself ready for a start.

The day was lovely, the air soft and mild, — a real Indian-summer day. The trees had already assumed their autumn dress of red and yellow, heightening the beauty of the landscape by their gorgeous coloring. As Theodora looked about her, a pang of regret went through her heart, as she thought how soon she must tear herself forever from all this loveliness; but she had not much opportunity for unpleasant reflections, for Ralph's spirits were irrepressible; he was truly elated at the prospect of having her all to himself for a "jolly good time," as he expressed it, and he soon imbued her with some of his liveliness.

"Come, Dode, don't lag along like an old woman!" he cried; "let's see who'll get down this hill and over to that big walnut tree first."

"Agreed," replied Theodora. "I'll soon show you that I'm not an old woman yet. Start fair."

"Ladies and gentlemen," began Ralph, with a flourish, addressing an imaginary audience, "the men in this race will start at the word 'Go!' Now — are you ready? — Go!"

Off they shot like arrows. Theodora had by no means lost her old fleetness of foot, and she rushed

along, soon distancing her small brother. Her hat flew off, and, as she reached the goal, her hair unloosed itself from its fastenings, and came tumbling down her back in a great wavy mass. "Who's an old woman now, I wonder?" she cried, as she leaned against the tree, out of breath. "Don't you want another race?"

"I tell you what," panted Ralph, "you just take the wind right out of a fellow. An old woman, I guess you're not; you don't look much like one with your hair all down that way. Don't put it up, Dody, don't; let it go, just to please me; it makes you look just as you used to."

"Well, bring me my hat," laughed Theodora; "you always were a little goose about my hair, and, to please you, I'll let it go until we start for home. Pick up those hair-pins, and I'll put them in my pocket."

"You're just the best sister in the world," replied Ralph, as he handed her her hat. "Now you give me a boost, and I'll shin up this tree in a jiffy; and then you see if I don't pelt you with nuts."

Amid much scrambling, some slight injury to trowsers, and a great deal of laughter, Theodora at last succeeded in giving Ralph a "boost," which enabled him to grasp a stout branch and pull himself up into the tree. The nuts were much more plenty than Theodora had supposed, as she soon realized, for they came down on her much faster than she could dodge them; but she entered into the spirit of the frolic, and sprang to the right and left, paying back with interest all the hits she received. The woods fairly rang with their shouts of laughter. Suddenly Ralph cried out, from the top of the tree, "Stop a minute, Dode, stop! Who's that just behind you?"

Theodora turned quickly, and there, directly behind

her, stood Mr. Carlyle. As she turned upon him, an exclamation of astonishment escaped his lips, and the expression of his face changed from one of amusement to that of intense surprise. "Miss Theodora, I see it all now; I only wonder —"

She interrupted him with a gesture which had in it quite as much of entreaty as of impatience, "Am I always to meet you under such awkward circumstances?" she cried. "Do you follow me about with the intention of annoying me? If that is your object you can certainly flatter yourself with your success."

Before Mr. Carlyle could reply, and as Theodora pulled off her hat and began to hastily twist up her unfortunate locks, Ralph shouted down, "I say, Mr. Carlyle, doesn't she look like a little girl with her hair down?"

"She certainly does," replied Mr. Carlyle, with emphasis, looking directly at Theodora. "If I had met her anywhere with it in that condition, I should have mistaken her for one."

Theodora said nothing, but turned to go up the hill; but Mr. Carlyle placed himself in front of her, saying as he did so, "Miss Theodora, do not go until you have assured me that this time at least you will believe me when I say that I had not the slightest intention of annoying you."

Theodora would not allow herself to look at him; she was mortified and angry; yet that power which she had determined to defy was fast asserting itself over her. She would not trust herself to speak; springing to one side, she shot past him up the hill before he was aware of her intentions.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

A WEEK passed, and yet nothing was said by any one in regard to the departure of the family from the farm. Theodora had hoped that her father would inform her when he wished to make the final move; but the idea never seemed to occur to him, and she felt that she could no longer put off making the dreaded suggestion to him. Six weeks ago she would have almost hailed the day with delight, all other feelings sinking into insignificance beside the relief she knew she should feel when once out of the house which no longer belonged to them; but as the day drew nearer and nearer, her attachment for the old farm again reasserted itself, and overpowered all lesser emotions.

Unbeknown to her father she went about the unoccupied rooms, gathering up the various little ornaments and packing them away. Each apartment she entered, everything she touched, called up memories which she had supposed long since dead,—little scenes of her childhood which she had entirely forgotten, and with which the memory of her mother was closely entwined. She found herself wandering about the house in an aimless way, looking from first one window then another, with a feeling of homesickness at her heart, as if she had already left the dear place. She looked up at the family portraits, which had smiled down upon her from

her babyhood, and wondered if they could ever look the same on other and newer walls.

The house was a singular one; it had originally been plain and unpretending in exterior, although large and substantial, but her father and grandfather had both made additions to it, which, by increasing its irregularity, added greatly to the picturesqueness of its appearance. A wing had been thrown out at the east, and a large bow-window built on to the sitting-room, extending up to the room above. Its gambrel-roof, huge old-fashioned chimneys, and ivy-covered walls made it peculiarly charming to any one who had an affection for antiquated buildings, and Theodora felt that no modern house, however elegant, could ever seem so beautiful to her.

She had been sitting for hours one afternoon in the room in which her mother had died; she had resolved that the next day should not pass without her having reminded her father that it was now time for them to leave the Hartwell Farm. The time had passed almost unconsciously to her, and the room grew dark and cold before she was aware how late it was; she rose and went slowly downstairs and entered the sitting-room. It appeared to be empty; a bright fire burned cheerfully in the grate, and cast a circle of ruddy light immediately in front of it, but the rest of the room remained in deep shadow. Theodora went up to the fireplace, and stood for some minutes, her head leaning against the mantel-shelf, lost in thought. Unconsciously she exclaimed aloud, "I cannot, cannot bear it! How can I leave my dear old home?"

There was a movement in one of the dark corners of the room, and as she lifted her head quickly, Mr. Carlyle came out of the gloom into the brightness of the firelight. Theodora would have fled from the room, but he intercepted her, saying, "Miss Theodora, give me a few moments, I beg of you. I have been trying for a week

to get an opportunity to speak with you ; but you avoided me in every way."

"Let me go ! let me go !" she cried. "I did not know you were here ; I thought I was alone."

"I know you did," replied Mr. Carlyle, effectually barring her escape. "I would have spoken the moment you entered, but I did not wish to startle you away."

"It would have been far better if you had," replied Theodora, retreating again to the fireplace, and endeavoring to assume a coldness she was far from feeling.

"Perhaps you are right," replied Mr. Carlyle ; "but I cannot regret it, since it has been the means of giving me the opportunity I so much wished for. A moment ago you asked yourself how you could leave your dear old home ? I answer you, that the choice to remain or go rests only with yourself."

Theodora was deeply agitated, but she determined not to allow her feelings to betray themselves. "Such a choice is impossible for me, as you certainly must know," she said. "I confess that my grief at leaving the place is far greater than you can possibly suppose, but nevertheless I could no longer remain in this house, holding the position which I now have."

"Nor do I ask you to," replied Mr. Carlyle, advancing nearer ; "I ask you to remain here as my wife."

Theodora gave a quick gasp ; she locked her fingers firmly together as she leaned against the mantel-piece for support ; she could not speak, and yet Mr. Carlyle stood silently before her. At last her words came slowly and hoarsely, "Mr. Carlyle, you once told me that I was incapable of entertaining a generous emotion toward you. I tell you now that I have always thought too highly of you to believe you capable of asking a woman to be your wife whom you did not love ; of offering her a home, when you had no heart to give her."

“Theodora! Theodora!” he cried, passionately, “will you always thus persistently misunderstand me? A week ago I, for the first time, recognized in you the girl whom I met on the rocks at Scranton; *then* I looked upon you as a child; now I recognize you as a woman, and the only woman I ever loved.” He paused a moment, then, as Theodora remained silent, continued: “I know you have entertained towards me a feeling of antagonism for which I have in vain tried to account; but my sudden recognition of you the other day furnished me with a clue which partially unravelled the mystery. O Theodora, have you not overcome the resentment which you entertained toward me when I treated you, as what I really thought you were, a headstrong, reckless child? Every day that I have lived under the same roof with you has strengthened and increased the love I feel for you. Do you think I would offer you my home, if my heart did not go with it? No, Theodora, no, I would not offer any woman such an insult. I know you think me stern and hard; but when you think what my life has been, you cannot wonder that I appear so; it is for you to teach me to be otherwise. I know that you have considered my will as indomitable; that I have wished to control everything around me. If that were so I should force you to love me; but I wish for no such love. It must come to me voluntarily; it must be strong enough to break down all the barriers of pride and resentment which you may build around it, and come to me in spite of everything. But a little over a year ago I held you in my arms against your will; now I hold them open to receive you, but you must enter them of your own accord. Theodora! will you come?”

Theodora had stood, while he was speaking, with her head buried in her hands; but every word he uttered found its echo in her wildly beating heart. She recog-

nized now the unknown power which she had acknowledged to herself had such control over her; it assailed her with overpowering force. She grew dizzy; a feeling of faintness overcame her, and her limbs trembled beneath her. She raised her head for an instant, put out her hands with a supplicating gesture, and tottered forward into the arms that were held towards her. Those arms closed round her; they held her in a fond embrace, which she no longer had either the strength or desire to resist. For some moments neither spoke; then, as Mr. Carlyle bent down and kissed her, he said, gently, "Look up, my Theodora; look up but for one moment. Let me hear my name but once from your lips."

Theodora raised her eyes to his; she could hardly command her voice, but the word came faintly, "Felix."

The face she had often thought so stern and resolute was fairly radiant, as he asked, "Is this my Felicitas?"

"Yes," she answered, smiling through her tears. "Oh, can you ever forgive me for my hasty words, my folly, my unjust, ungenerous treatment of you that day when I discovered what your name was?"

"Can I forgive you?" he repeated, smiling down on her. "Yes, I think so, since you repent of it at last; *then*, you know, you said you never would."

"I hardly know what I said," she replied. "I was almost beside myself with anger and mortification. O Felix, I am afraid you hardly know what a wilful, impetuous girl I am."

He looked at her a moment without speaking, then said, with great seriousness, "Theodora, I know you are impetuous, at times even wilful; but I also know the truth, the generosity of your nature. The strength of character which has led you to make any sacrifice, however great, which your conscience told you was right; the womanly patience with which you have borne your

sorrows and disappointments, — these, in my eyes, make you seem a true heroine.”

Could it be possible? Was it really true? Had she unconsciously reached the end for which she had so long been striving? She could not speak, her joy was too great for utterance; but she looked up at Mr. Carlyle with eyes in which happiness sat enthroned.

How long the two would have remained there, forgetful of all the world but each other, must remain an unanswered question; for while they were yet in a delightful state of oblivion they heard the study-door open, and Mr. Hartwell's footsteps approaching the sitting-room. “Oh, I must go!” cried Theodora, in a whisper, trying to disengage herself from Mr. Carlyle's arms; “father is coming in here.”

“No, no, my darling, you must not go; surely you are not ashamed to see him? Leave all to me.”

At that moment Mr. Hartwell entered the room, and Mr. Carlyle released his hold of Theodora. “Why are the lamps not lighted, Theodora?” asked Mr. Hartwell. “Do you and Mr. Carlyle prefer sitting in the twilight?”

Theodora could not reply, and Mr. Carlyle came to her assistance, saying, “We did not need the lamps, sir; we have been discussing a very important question, and I hardly think we knew whether they were lighted or not.”

“Ah, indeed!” replied Mr. Hartwell, absently, as he took his accustomed seat by the fireside, and Theodora proceeded to light the lamp. “Mr. Carlyle, I have come to the conclusion that it is time for me to fix the day for our departure from the farm. I fear I have already lingered too long. If so, I know you will pardon me; but I must not put off the dreaded day of parting any longer, and I have decided to go at once. I have much to thank you for; you —”

"Thank me for nothing, sir," interrupted Mr. Carlyle, taking the hand Mr. Hartwell extended towards him; "thank me for nothing, and never speak of leaving this place, for as long as you live your home shall be here. Mr. Hartwell, I know you will be surprised at what I am about to tell you, — I love your daughter; she loves me in return, and has consented to become my wife."

Mr. Hartwell looked at Mr. Carlyle in bewilderment; it seemed impossible for him to believe his ears. When Mr. Carlyle began speaking, Theodora had come forward and knelt at her father's feet, with her face buried on his arm. He put his hand on her head and said, "Look up, my daughter, look up, Theodora, and tell me if you love this man."

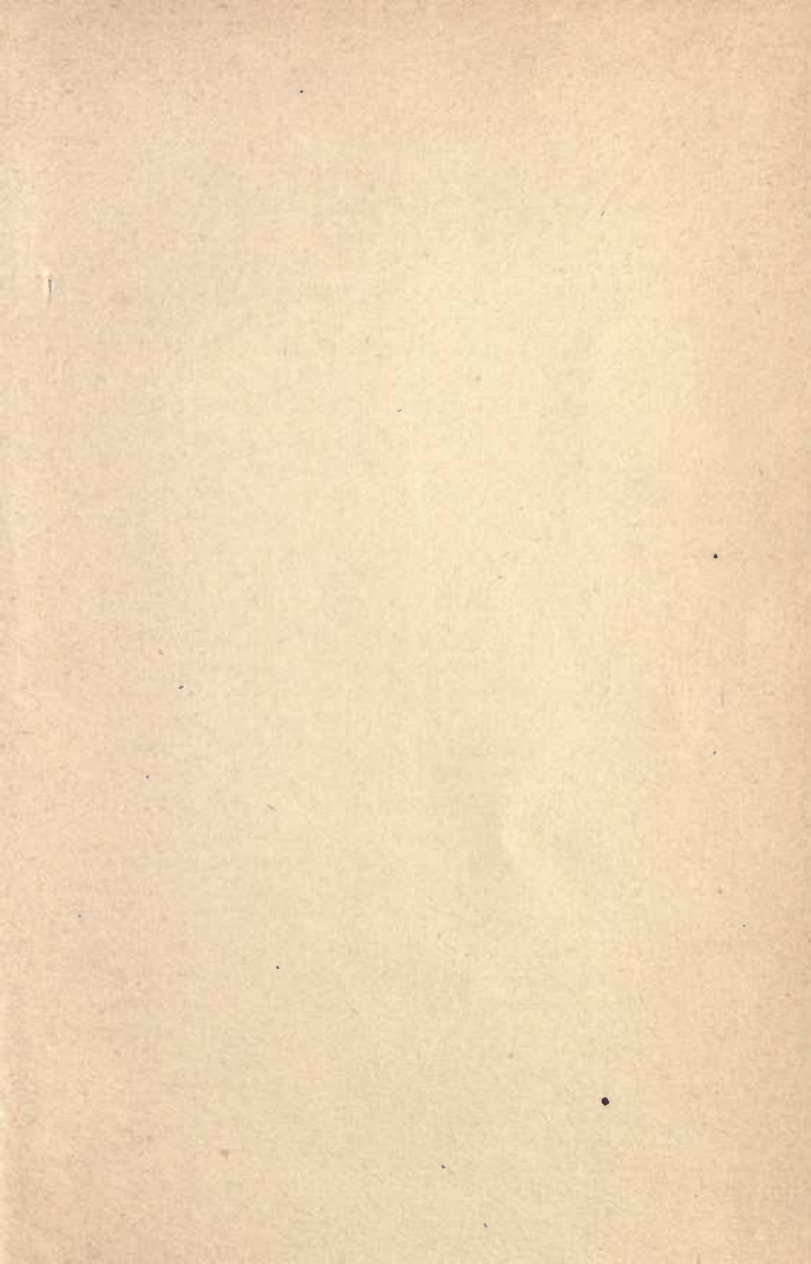
Theodora raised her head. "I do, father," she answered, "as truly and sincerely as I believe he loves me."

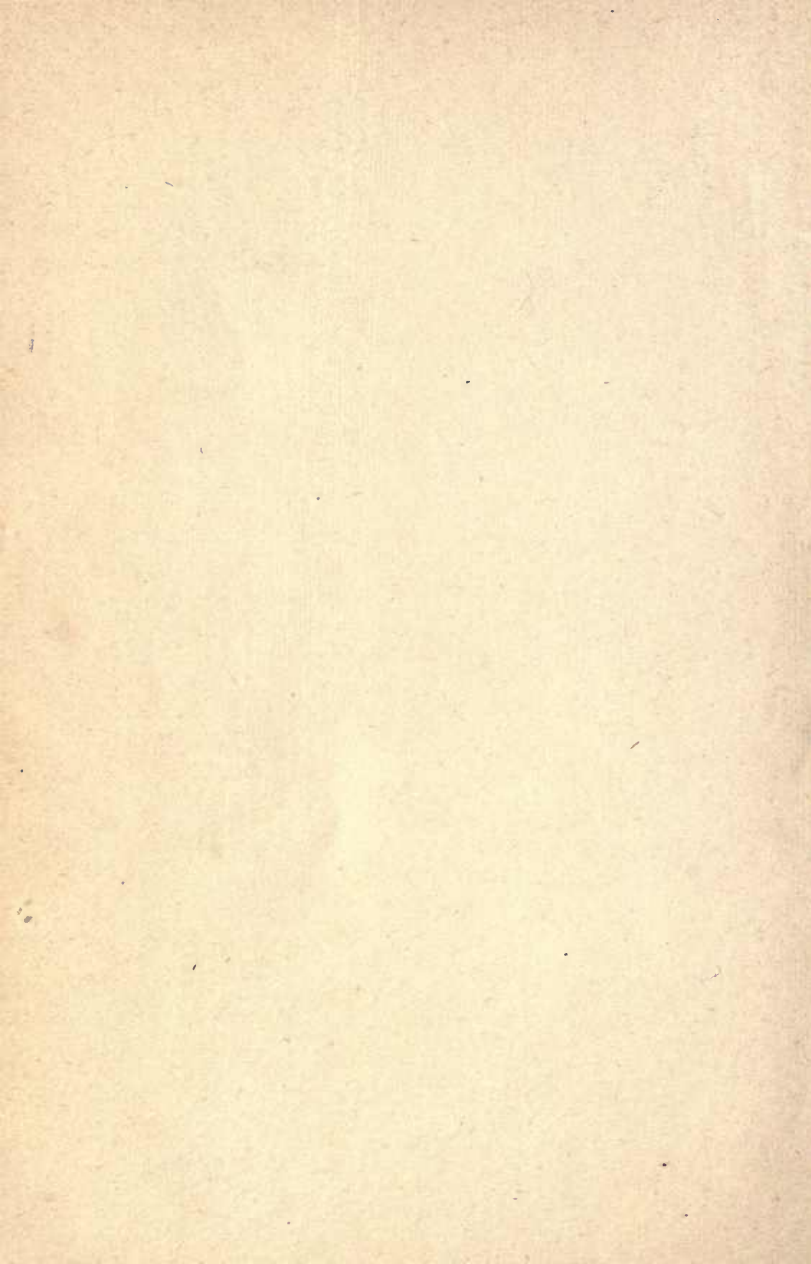
"And are you willing to trust your future happiness in his hands? Are you willing to become his wife?"

"I am," she replied, firmly, but with flushed cheeks.

"Then," said Mr. Hartwell, taking her hand and placing it in that of Mr. Carlyle, "take her, with my blessing. I resign her willingly to your charge. I know you will be a faithful husband to her. She has been a noble daughter to me, the strength and comfort of my old age; she will be a true, affectionate wife to you. My dream will be realized, — no other woman will fill the place in this house her mother filled; my declining years will be spent under the old roof, and one of my children will find her home at The Hartwell Farm."

FINIS.







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